



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, May 29, 2008**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 29, 2008

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[*English*]

### COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**The Speaker:** I have the honour, pursuant to section 66 of the Official Languages Act, to lay upon the table the annual report of the Commissioner of Official Languages for the period from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f), this document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

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[*English*]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation in the 16th annual meeting of the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum, APPF, held in Auckland, New Zealand from January 21-25, 2008.

## COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

### CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, which has considered the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009, and report same.

As well, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, which has considered supplementary estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009, and report same.

[*Translation*]

### TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

**Mr. Mervin Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, entitled, "Report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities on Rail Safety in Canada".

[*English*]

I am pleased to report that the committee has made 14 recommendations that we believe will help address the issue of rail safety in Canada. I also thank and congratulate the committee members who I believe have presented an excellent report on rail safety.

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### TOXIC SUBSTANCES LABELLING ACT

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-553, An Act to ensure that warning labels are affixed to products containing toxic substances.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is long-awaited, right to know legislation. As we know, 95% of Canadians, in poll after poll, have indicated that they believe they should have the right to know when there are toxic and cancer causing substances in the products they buy.

California and Europe already have right to know legislation so people are well aware when there are toxic and cancer causing substances that exist in the products they buy. Canadians believe, profoundly, that they should have the right to know when there are toxic substances in the products they buy. The NDP, by putting forward this legislation, is providing them with that right to know.

*Routine Proceedings*

I should mention that this legislation has been prepared with the help of Mae Burrows and Toxic Free Canada and has the support of Option consommateurs and the Canadian Cancer Society.

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

\* \* \*

**OPEN GOVERNMENT ACT**

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-554, An Act to amend the Access to Information Act (open government).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my seconder, my colleague from Trinity—Spadina.

Today, on the 25th anniversary of the Access to Information Act, I am pleased to present a bill that would change the name of the Access to Information Act to the open government act. It would have a comprehensive reform to many clauses. It would impose the duty to create records. It would introduce a public interest override in the application of the Access to Information Act and would create the situation where cabinet confidences would no longer be excluded automatically from the scrutiny of the Access to Information Act.

I should point out that every clause in the bill was written by the former information commissioner, Mr. John Reid, and his staff. It has been endorsed by Justice Gomery and by the Conservative Party of Canada because every clause in the bill was in the campaign literature in the 2006 federal election campaign where the Conservatives promised specifically to introduce every aspect of John Reid's open government act.

This is reform that is long overdue and absolutely necessary to lay the foundation for the transparency and accountability that Canadians expect.

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

● (1010)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Thibault:** Mr. Speaker, further to discussions among the independent members and the parties of this House concerning rising gas prices and the negative effect on citizens and the economy, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to move the following motion: “That, in the opinion of the House, the government should create an oil revenue redistribution fund, based on the principle of fairness to all citizens, that would levy a tax on the earnings of oil companies and other companies that emit greenhouse gases in such a way as to respect provincial jurisdictions and not unduly threaten the economies of the energy producing provinces; such a fund would: (i) democratize investments in energy efficiency; (ii) provide financial assistance for low-income individuals to counter the rising cost of oil products; (iii) promote collective forms of transportation in the workplace; (iv) modernize and encourage the use of marine and rail transport.”

**The Speaker:** Does the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration presented on Thursday, December 13, 2007, and I should like to move concurrence at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to split my time with the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster, who actually moved a motion at the Immigration and Citizenship committee about a year and a half ago.

We know that Iraq war resisters, who have refused to fight George W. Bush's illegal war, have been stuck in limbo in Canada for years. Canadians are proud of our history of opening our doors to Vietnam war resisters. We are equally united in saying no to George Bush's illegal invasion of Iraq. Today can be another landmark for Canadians as the day when the Parliament of Canada finally allowed war resisters to stay.

War resisters tell us that they joined the armed forces to escape poverty and make ends meet, and to protect their country, but not to break international law.

Phillip McDowell, one of the many war resisters in Canada, said, “I joined the military to defend my country. I didn't join or volunteer to take part in an illegal war or a war of aggression”. He adds that, to him, the war is unjust.

Kim Rivera recounts why she joined the army. She said, “I was working at Wal-Mart in Fort Worth, Texas, my home town. My husband and I have two small children, and I had to help make ends meet. But I ran into a glass ceiling at Wal-Mart and couldn't earn enough. I decided to join the army so I could get an adequate income, job training, and health care for my family”.

Like many others, Rivera was misinformed. As a mother of two, she was ensured by her recruiter that women were rarely deployed to combat zones. Less than a year later, she was in Iraq. She said, “the army told me I wouldn't be sent into combat, but once I got to Iraq I was under enemy fire every day”.

The conditions in Iraq severely traumatized Rivera. She recounts one incident when an Iraqi woman who became her friend was badly wounded.

As a mother and wife, Rivera faced multiple barriers. She recounts, “the Army had no regard for my role as a wife and mother. I tried to keep in touch with my family by phone, but it isn't the same as being together. Once I got frustrated and had an argument with my husband. A sergeant overheard me and told me I should get a divorce. He even put separation papers in front of me and told me to fill them out! But I love my husband and I want most of all to keep my family together”.

*Routine Proceedings*

Like many others, Rivera and her family decided to leave. She explains, “on leave back in the U.S., my husband and I decided the war was wrong based on our values as Christians, and the Army was tearing my family apart. We decided that we would go to Canada, where we heard there were other families like ours”.

U.S. war resisters, like Rivera, tell us many disturbing tales about the Bush government's illegal war in Iraq.

Phillip McDowell, who is a former sergeant in the United States army, is one of the many resisters who has first-hand experience on the front lines in Iraq. He stated, “throughout my tour, I was told to run civilian cars off the road if they got in the way. I saw the mistreatment of Iraqi civilians or detainees who I found out later had done nothing wrong at all. I saw more evil being brought to the country that we were supposed to be liberating”.

Christopher Magaoay, a former lance corporal in the Marine Corps, echoes McDowell's story. He states, “I was trained and told to train others on how to cover up the killing of non-combatants”.

I will tell members who these non-combatants were. They were innocent civilians.

He goes on to state, “We were told to place shovels, shrapnel and any small arms available next to these bodies. Our instructions were to justify our kills by saying that the deceased was attempting to plant an improvised explosive device and to point to the planted evidence”.

• (1015)

Let us imagine that. Like the other conscientious objectors, Mr. Magaoay had to make a very difficult choice. He said: “I had to make a decision in my life to choose between committing what I know to be crimes under both military and international law or to leave. I couldn't live with myself knowing that I was a part of killing innocent civilians. I know the nightmares that follow the faces of the dead; I chose the path of resistance by coming to Canada”.

Deciding to leave the army, the navy or the marines is never an easy decision for a soldier. In speaking about his decision to leave the army after nine years, Patrick Hart, a supply sergeant who served in Germany, the U.S., and Kuwait after the invasion of Iraq, stated: “I realized I just couldn't continue to be part of the Army any more. It was a hard decision, but in August 2006 I crossed the border from Buffalo, my home town, and came to Toronto”.

Let me tell members that Mr. Hart and his family are contributing daily to the neighbourhood where he lives, which happens to be in my riding of Trinity—Spadina.

Many resisters served their terms of duty in Iraq and vow never to return to any more war. Mr. McDowell explains that when he came back from Iraq: “I was determined not to have any part in this at all. I was determined that when my contract was up with the military, when my volunteer service was over, I was going to separate and not be in the military anymore.

Patrick Hart, who has a child and a wife, explains the reasons that led him to resist serving in Iraq. He said: “While I was in Kuwait I spoke to many of the soldiers who had been to Iraq. When I heard about some of the things they did, [it was] really upsetting,

especially what happened to children caught in the fighting. I thought of my son Ryan and realized how horrible it must be for Iraqi parents”.

Leaving the armed forces or getting a reassignment is not an option for war resisters. McDowell told the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration that “in the United States military, if a U.S. soldier develops a conscientious objection to a particular war, there is no avenue for him to seek reassignment or transfer to some other place”.

He recounts his own experience after completing his service in June 2006: “I was called back into service involuntarily under the army's Stop Loss policy”. He said, “I was told that I was going to have a 15-month tour in Iraq”.

Disappointed, Mr. McDowell tried to find a way out. He explained: “I told my chain of command that I disagreed with the war and that I didn't want to go. I said I would be in the military and do something in the States, as long as I didn't go to Iraq. They said I did not have a choice; I was going to Iraq”.

Like many other resisters, Mr. McDowell turned to Canada for help. He explains that “knowing that Canada did not participate in the Iraq War and that it made that decision because the United Nations didn't approve of it, and knowing, myself, that the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in 2004, declared the war illegal, I thought it was right for me to move to Canada to take this decision”.

The choice to leave their country, their jobs and their communities also affects the families of these war resisters. Hart, who lives in my riding, said: “—when I told my wife Jill about my decision to leave the Army, she was really upset, but I'm glad to say she decided to join me in Canada”. Their son is in a local school, at Dewson. They are fundraising for the epilepsy association. Jill was the president of the housing co-op. They are volunteering. They are working. Jill is working as a manager of a very popular place, the Lula Lounge, a very famous place where musicians play in Toronto.

Let me tell members that these four Iraq war resisters have said that their stories are not unique and that there are many other resisters here. Another one who served is Chuck Wiley. He served in the army for 17 years. He is a veteran. He decided to leave when he learned that his ship's actions were in contravention of the Geneva Convention.

• (1020)

Another resister, Dean Walcott, a field marine who was deployed in the initial invasion of Iraq and redeployed to serve in a military hospital, left when he learned from the wounded soldiers the truth about what was happening.

Some, like Jeremy Hinzman, came to seek sanctuary, not because of opposition to the war in Iraq but because of a personal aversion to killing fellow humans.

Canada has always been a place of refuge for war resisters—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am sorry, but the hon. member's 10 minutes are up. We now need to proceed to questions and comments. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have just a quick question for the hon. member. In regard to the people she speaks of in respect to her motion, would she agree with me that they have made application for refuge under the refugee protection legislation that presently exists?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, they have put in refugee applications. Unfortunately, the board refused to decide whether the war in Iraq is illegal.

However, I can tell members that the War Resisters Support Campaign has received 40,000 signatures on a petition asking that they be allowed to stay in Canada. A poll from June 2007 shows that 64.6% of Ontarians, including supporters from all major political parties, agree that war resisters should be allowed to stay in Canada.

I believe that we really have to resolve this with a political solution and not hide behind the Immigration and Refugee Board, because, after all, the board members are appointees of the government and tend to have certain political views. We know that our country's principled commitment to peace and fairness is a tradition, because we allowed 50,000 U.S. war resisters to stay in Canada during the Vietnam war.

The war resisters face major obstacles in their goal of settling in Canada and living here in peace. Their lives are very difficult and we have to find some way to help, which is why we moved this motion that basically says we should allow them to stay in Canada.

• (1025)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the hon. member one difference between the Vietnam war and the current military in the United States. In the Vietnam war, it was not a voluntary military; it was drafted.

Currently it is an all-volunteer service just like the Canadian, British and German forces, which have some level of conscription. People do not join with their eyes closed. If they do, then they have their own problems.

As for volunteer soldiers in the United States who have difficulty with the mission they are on, first of all, soldiers do not get to vote for which missions they go on. They are assigned by their legal government, which is making legal decisions. If they have difficulty with that and want to fight the system, that is fine. That is their option. Why do they not fight it within their own country in their own legal system instead of being faux refugees in Canada?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, let me say first that in the 1960s and 1970s during the war in Vietnam it was not just the people who were drafted who came to Canada. In fact, people who went to war voluntarily also came to Canada.

It is unfortunate that I do not have enough time, because I could give hon. members the history of how the decisions were made. Early in 1969, a memo was discussed in cabinet. There were all sorts of debates at that time. Originally the government of the day said no, but people in Canada rose up and said that it was really important to decide which side Canada was on. Were we on the side of the United States in the war in Vietnam or would we allow the draft dodgers and the war resisters to stay in Canada?

During that time, Canadians spoke out so loudly and clearly that the government, which initially said no throughout the early 1970s, then changed its mind. After two or three major decisions, it allowed all soldiers and their family members to stay in Canada. They were not just people who had been drafted. Some of them volunteered to go into the army.

That is the history of this in Canada. I hope the Conservative government listens to the stories of these families. They are facing jail terms when they return to the United States. That means they would have criminal records, which means they would not be able to get jobs. They would not be able to get a mortgage. Their entire lives would be destroyed.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak to this concurrence motion on the third report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Just for the record, in that report the committee recommends:

—that the government immediately implement a program to allow conscientious objectors and their immediate family members (partners and dependents), who have refused or left military service related to a war not sanctioned by the United Nations and do not have a criminal record, to apply for permanent resident status and remain in Canada; and that the government should immediately cease any removal or deportation actions that may have already commenced against such individuals.

This is a very important report from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. I am glad that the standing committee was able to finally make that clear statement about the need to offer a welcome to war resisters, war resisters to the war in Iraq, American war resisters here in Canada, and that it garnered the support of all the opposition parties on the committee.

The committee considered this for some time. Early attempts that I made to raise this issue were not as successful as recent ones, often spearheaded by my colleague from Trinity—Spadina, so I am very glad that we are here today to discuss this majority report of the standing committee.

Canada needs people of conscience. We have been well served by such people who have taken a stand on an important issue of principle, a stand for peace, a stand for truth and accountability of government, and a stand against militarism. In the case of Iraqi war resisters who are currently coming to Canada, their conscientious objection has not been recognized in the United States. It has not been recognized through the conscientious objection process of the U.S. military.

I think we also want to say that wherever we have military forces we want soldiers who do not check their conscience at the recruiting office doors. We need people in the armed forces who act out of full conscience. That is what these American war resisters are doing. As such, as people of conscience, they should receive a welcome in Canada.

*Routine Proceedings*

It is very clear that Canadians do not support the war in Iraq. That has been shown time and time again across this country. Many of us believe that it is an illegal war, and Canada rightly refused to participate in that war. Our government made the right decision to not participate in the war in Iraq.

It is now very clear that the United States and President Bush lied, I do not think it is too strong to say, about the situation in Iraq prior to the invasion. They lied about the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. They lied that this fight was against al-Qaeda or that it was a war on terrorism. Even as recently as yesterday, we saw that President Bush's own messengers, the people who were communications spokespeople in his office, are now admitting their role in promoting this misrepresentation and admitting that they helped promote a war for different reasons than those publicly stated by the U.S. administration.

There is no doubt that the Saddam Hussein regime was a problem, to say the least, but the invasion on false pretences and the ongoing war were and are wrong and have done nothing to improve the lives of ordinary Iraqis. In fact, the situation is much, much worse for ordinary Iraqis today. This war is a terrible mistake, something that Americans themselves are increasingly aware of, and the dramatic decline in support for the war in the United States is clear evidence of that.

Many patriotic Americans signed on with their armed forces because they believed what they were told by their leaders. After serving in Iraq, they came to know the truth and decided they could no longer in good conscience participate. We should listen to their stories. The member for Trinity—Spadina told some of those stories this morning. They speak clearly to the horror of war and the way these honourable people struggled with their personal responsibility for that war.

Many of those folks signed on to the military because that was their only way of getting an education and their only way out of poverty and difficult financial circumstances. After serving a tour of duty, many are being forced back to Iraq against their conscience by the stop loss program, which extends their deployment beyond anything contemplated when they enlisted. This is another serious problem that these people face with the process in the American military. None of this is acceptable.

●(1030)

These war resisters are people who can make a huge contribution to Canada and who share key values with Canadians, values that have taught them to struggle to do what is right and resist what is wrong, values that lead them to want to support a path of peace rather than war, values that value life over death, and values that seek the best for their country and hold it to high ideals.

Canada has benefited often from such refugees and immigrants many times in our history. Mennonites, Doukhobors, Vietnam war resisters have all made significant contributions to our country and our communities. I do not think anyone would deny this.

Canada made it possible for over 100,000 Vietnam war resisters to find a haven from militarism here in Canada. New Democrats were early supporters of extending that welcome. Former Prime Minister Trudeau actively sought that solution eventually and stated that

Canada should be a haven from militarism during the Vietnam war. Over 50,000 of those folks remained in Canada. I am constantly amazed and impressed at where I meet them and the kind of contribution they are making to this country.

Canada did well by that migration. Canada did well by our decision to welcome those young men and women of conscience.

This is one way Canada can be an agent for peace in the world. We can make a statement by extending a welcome to Iraq war resisters, and indeed resisters of war in other situations and other conflicts.

I believe Canadians strongly support such an action. There must be a special immigration program for conscientious objectors. We must allow them a safe haven. We must ensure that people from countries that are unwilling to recognize conscientious objection find a welcome here.

I have said that Canadians support this. I have tabled petitions here in the House from 15,000 Canadians back in June 2005 who called for exactly this kind of welcome for U.S. war resisters. I know other MPs have tabled petitions with many more signatures.

The war resister support campaign is working across Canada in many different communities to support war resisters and to extend support to the broader community for them. Thousands of people in Canada have endorsed their declaration. Many have contributed financially to the ongoing support of war resisters. They have also lobbied many of us here in the House of Commons.

Back on May 15 it was International Conscientious Objection Day. This day is important to many people who are conscientious objectors to war and militarism here in Canada. Along with some of those people that I have worked with, we have developed a bill called the conscientious objection act or more commonly known as the peace tax bill, where people of conscience would have the opportunity to divert some of their income tax away from military purposes and place it in a peace tax fund.

This bill was developed in cooperation with people from Conscience Canada, Quakers, Mennonites, the Mennonite Central Committee and Nos impôts pour la paix.

I think there is also a very important statement from the United Church of Canada, the Canadian Friends Service Committee, the Mennonite Central Committee and the Canadian Friends Service Committee and the yearly meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, the Quakers. It is an aspect that is regularly raised by the war resister support campaign as a major principle of that campaign. The churches say in this letter:

The majority of Canadians and the Government of Canada did not support the Iraq war. The Nuremberg principles established that soldiers have a duty not a choice to refuse to carry out immoral orders. The UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 18) and the UN Handbook for Refugees (Chapter 5, Section B) makes clear that conscientious objectors to war have rights and can require protection from states.

I think it is good for us here in this place to be reminded of those obligations given the debate here today before us.

*Routine Proceedings*

I believe that it is time to take a stand, that Canadians want us in this place to take a stand on this important issue. We have to offer a welcome to people of conscience, people who share the values of Canadians.

I would urge the government to take heed of these concerns, to immediately stop all removal action against American war resisters and introduce a program such as that contemplated in this motion and in this report from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to allow them to remain here in Canada as permanent residents.

I believe that Canada will benefit strongly from their contribution, and that Canada will benefit strongly from taking this important ethical and moral stand against the war in Iraq.

•(1035)

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me thank my colleague from the New Democratic Party for his comments on this issue.

It really seems to be that we in Canada are in strong support of the United Nations and in strong support in making sure that we discourage unilateral type elections outside of world organizations, such as the UN.

What we should be doing and what the motion talks about is putting our values that we stand on by supporting the United Nations. As well, we should be trying to work toward peace and supporting those individuals who find themselves caught in a terrible dilemma, such as the war resisters that we are talking about.

If one looks at the leadership that we have taken on the whole issue of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and if we believe in these ideas, it would really seem to me that we must, with those same thoughts, extend and support those people who are standing up as a matter of conscience and who are standing up and saying, “this war is not the war that I believed it was when I got into it being a just war—

•(1040)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Kitchener—Waterloo for his intervention in this important debate because I know it is something that is very important to him.

Indeed, when I was on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration and trying to raise this issue, it was often very lonely, but the member for Kitchener—Waterloo was always supportive of the efforts. In fact, at one point he and I were the only ones on that committee who were willing to support this kind of measure. I want to thank him for being willing to be outspoken and take that important stand, as he often does in this place.

The member raises important points about Canada needing to walk the walk and not just talk the talk on important issues; to walk the walk and not just talk the talk on our commitment to multilateralism and on our commitment to the United Nations.

We need to be very clear to do what Canadians expect of us. When they so resoundingly supported the decision not to enter the war in Iraq, when in fact we may easily say that they led that decision not to

enter the war in Iraq. It was very clear that Canadian public opinion was not supportive even before the government announced its decision not to participate. Therefore, I think it is very important.

This report today and a concurrence vote in the House of Commons supporting this report would be a very dramatic, clear and important way that the House of Commons could show that Canadians are prepared to look at the full implications of that appropriate stand against the war in Iraq, and make sure that our domestic policies around who gets into Canada and gets to stay here reflect that commitment against the illegal war in Iraq that so many people around the world now know was a tragic mistake. So many Americans now agree that it was a tragic mistake and a decision taken under false pretenses by the American president and the American government.

**Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this motion refers to conscientious objectors and I will tell the member up front I am prepared to support this motion. I think it is one that many of us will be prepared to support.

I wish to question the member because the term “war resister” is used in the media and it is used by many people. The definition of “war resister” and what the motion says about a conscientious objector, to me, and particularly the latter term, is more constrained. It has a legal meaning.

Would the member like to elaborate on whether he sees any difference or whether these two terms are interchangeable? I think this is important to the discussion in order not to mislead people.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, the concern has arisen and the reason we are discussing this report today is specifically because of American citizens who were in the American armed forces and made a decision of conscience not to participate further in the war in Iraq. They have refused redeployment to Iraq and, as such, are resisters of that particular war.

However, they are at the same time conscientious objectors and many of them have actually engaged the conscientious objection process in the American military, unsuccessfully unfortunately. When we listen to the stories of how that process unfolded for many of them, it is hard to believe that the articulate and deeply held convictions that they brought to those commissions and the requests for conscientious objector status were not heard by the American authorities making those decisions.

These are people who are incredibly surprised at the position they find themselves in. These are not unpatriotic Americans in that sense. These are not people who held a low opinion of the American armed forces. They are people who, through a long period of struggle, came to a very important decision in their own lives and are now seeking our support to honour that very difficult decision they came to and to protect their lives.

*Routine Proceedings*

●(1045)

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the first question I posed was whether the persons contemplated in the motion are the types who would have applied under our refugee protection legislation and the answer was yes, they would have gone through that process. As the hon. member mentioned in his speech, there is a process of course in the United States, a due process for conscientious objectors.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in the handbook, calls for consideration of whether a resister was drafted or joined the army voluntarily and those coming to Canada now have volunteered for military service, just as the member for Edmonton Centre has indicated.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has indicated that Canada is really a model to the rest of the world in terms of the refugee protection system that it has. Of course, it is intended to protect refugees who genuinely fear persecution, the threat of torture and, in certain cases, death. It is for that purpose that we have the system.

We have a board that hears the refugee application and all of the circumstances related to it. In the event of a negative decision, the decision of the board can be appealed with leave to the Federal Court of Appeal and, if leave is granted, can be heard at the Federal Court of Appeal. In fact, if that process is gone through and there is a negative decision in the Federal Court, an appeal can be made to the Supreme Court of Canada for a decision on that as well.

We know that many have gone through that process and have received negative decisions. Then our refugee protection due process allows for applications to be made under humanitarian and compassionate grounds. In many cases, applications have been made on humanitarian and compassionate grounds and on more than one occasion all of the factors that may apply to the case or have an issue of compassion to it are presented and heard. In the event of a negative decision in that case, there is also an opportunity to apply for a pre-removal risk assessment before the person is returned to his or her country after all of that due process.

Indeed, legislation has been proposed and is going through the Senate with respect to a refugee appeal division, which is another layer of process. This does not happen at the same time but at various times, to such a point that some cases take years to complete and the confidence of the system starts to be called into question.

Through this report, the opposition would have the government allow a small and discrete group of people to completely bypass both the refugee determination process and our system of judicial review, both of which have uniformly rejected their claims of being in need of protection. Not only does the opposition want us to allow a shortcut around the refugee system, it would have the government create a special queue jumping loophole in our immigration process to allow these people to stay here legally while they flout the laws of their own country and renege on their voluntary commitments.

Right now, Canada has a fair, internationally recognized system for providing refuge to those fleeing persecution. We are committed to protecting refugees. However, Canadians want a refugee system

that helps true refugees. This means we must ensure the system is there for those who genuinely need it.

There is no compelling reason to undermine the integrity, the fairness, and the consistency of our immigration and refugee protection programs in order to provide a special and unique benefit to the claimants that are referred to in the motion.

That said, I would therefore move:

That the House do now proceed to the Orders of the Day.

●(1050)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion is in order. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

●(1130)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 118*)

## YEAS

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Allen
Allison	Anderson
Bezan	Blaney
Boucher	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinoogee	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Davidson	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Doyle	Dykstra
Epp	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Harris	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Jaffer
Jean	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Lukiwski

*Routine Proceedings*

Lunn  
MacKenzie  
Menzies  
Miller  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Norlock  
Obhrai  
Petit  
Prentice  
Richardson  
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Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Nicholson  
O'Connor  
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Scheer  
Shipley  
Smith  
Sorenson  
Strahl  
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)  
Toews  
Tweed  
Vellacott  
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Brunelle  
Demers  
Hanger  
Lalonde  
Lévesque  
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)  
Preston  
St-Hilaire  
Thompson (Wild Rose)

Benoit  
Comuzzi  
Guay  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Lemay  
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Pallister  
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Bachand  
Bains  
Barnes  
Bélangier  
Bellavance  
Bevilacqua  
Bigras  
Blais  
Boshcoff  
Bourgeois  
Brown (Oakville)  
Carrier  
Chow  
Cotler  
Crowder  
Cuzner  
Davies  
Deschamps  
Dosanjh  
Duceppe  
Faille  
Freeman  
Gagnon  
Godfrey  
Gravel  
Guimond  
Hubbard  
Jennings  
Karetak-Lindell  
Keeper  
Laframboise  
LeBlanc  
Lessard  
Malhi  
Maloney  
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
Mathysen  
McGuinty  
Ménard (Hochelaga)  
Mourani  
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)  
Murray  
Ouellet  
Patry  
Perron  
Plamondon  
Ratansi  
Regan  
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Savoie  
Sgro  
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Steckle  
Telegdi

André  
Atamanenko  
Bagnell  
Barbot  
Beaumier  
Bell (Vancouver Island North)  
Bennett  
Bevington  
Black  
Bonsant  
Bouchard  
Brison  
Cardin  
Chan  
Coderre  
Crête  
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)  
D'Amours  
DeBellefeuille  
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Dryden  
Easter  
Folco  
Fry  
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Karygiannis  
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Lavallée  
Lee  
Lussier  
Malo  
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)  
Masse  
McCallum  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
Minna  
Mulcair  
Murphy (Charlottetown)  
Nadeau  
Paquette  
Pearson  
Picard  
Proulx  
Redman  
Rodriguez  
Savage  
Scott  
Siksay  
St. Amand  
Szabo  
Temelkovski

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

[*English*]

The House will now resume debate on the concurrence motion and we find ourselves in questions and comments following the speech of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

• (1135)

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the parliamentary secretary because I do find his remarks to be of great concern.

The parliamentary secretary went on about the various processes that he says are available to people like the war resisters. He talked about the conscientious objection process that is available in the American military. He talked about our refugee process here. It is the failure of those processes that led us to this very motion today. It is the fact that they do not work, and they have not worked, to protect people of conscience. That clearly has been the experience of people who came to Canada.

He also made an incredible statement, that the proposed legislation on the refugee appeal division was now before the Senate. The parliamentary secretary knows that is part of the current Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and what is before the Senate is a bill calling on the government to implement legislation that has already been passed by the House of Commons and the Senate, which is an outrageous statement in itself.

If this process has the integrity that the parliamentary secretary says it does, why did the government move to disallow any consideration of the legality of the war in Iraq from the process? Why do thousands and thousands of Canadians want to see a particular process that would allow war resisters to remain in Canada because they are people of conscience?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I recognize the hon. parliamentary secretary, I would ask those who are standing having a conversation very close to him and who will be in the range of the camera to get out of the way. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, I would pose a question to the member in return. If there is a process in the country of origin that has not been used, should it not first be used to ensure that the due process that exists is applied for and followed?

It is not so much an issue of a failure of process. We have a number of processes and I have outlined them: a hearing before a board and potentially an appeal from the board; leave to appeal to the Federal Court; an appeal to the Federal Court; an application to the Supreme Court; a humanitarian and compassionate grounds application, more than once; a pre-removal risk assessment. If a person receives a negative decision, at some point the person has to respect that. What the member is saying is that if they do not like a decision, they would like a program developed to add yet another layer to ensure that they could succeed, if that is what they want. It is not a failure of process. Adding another layer to the process certainly is not what is necessary.

The court has ruled on this issue saying that someone who, during his or her time in the military, develops an objection after he or she has volunteered is not entitled to refugee protection as we know it. There is a process that should be followed.

Does the member not agree that the process should be followed? At some point, when a negative decision is received, one would expect the person to respect the negative decision and leave the country.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees “Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status” states in paragraph 171:

—the type of military action, with which an individual does not wish to be associated, is condemned by the international community as contrary to basic rules of human conduct, punishment for desertion or draft-evasion could, in light of all other requirements of the definition, in itself be regarded as persecution.

That is the definition used by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Why is Canada, under the Conservative government, refusing to follow the guidelines of the UNHCR, where it says very clearly that by this kind of definition it is seen as a persecution? That is why these conscientious objectors or war resisters should be allowed to stay. Obviously our refugee system does not—

• (1140)

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, the definition of what a refugee is or is not is well defined in our law and it has been interpreted by a variety of courts. The definition is well settled in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The UNHCR has stated that our system is a model system for the rest of the world in terms of its generosity, its fairness, and the broadness of its extent.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees handbook calls for the consideration of whether a resister was drafted or joined the army voluntarily. Those now coming to Canada volunteered for military service. When one volunteers and then later develops some objection, that in and of itself would not allow the person to qualify as a refugee in the true sense as it is meant to mean and as it is defined. In fact, a number of individuals had the benefit of the interpretation not only by a board, but the Federal Court and the

Supreme Court of Canada also commented on these issues. The handbook makes a distinction and for good reason.

At some point, as I have said, when a person goes through the process, he or she either fits the category or does not. If the person fails and receives a negative decision, our generous system has other options. There are other processes that can be used to determine, notwithstanding that, could an application still be made on humanitarian or compassionate grounds. A full hearing is entitled and on some occasions more than once.

At some point with all of these existing processes, due process must prevail. When a negative decision is received, at some point it needs to be respected. That is primarily the point we are making. It is a point that not only is well made but it is an important point if we want to ensure the continued integrity of our system and if we want to have the support of Canadians who want to see a system that is not only respected but is followed.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary did not answer the question posed to him by the member for Burnaby—Douglas, which related to the refugee appeal division. The refugee appeal division is in legislation. What it takes now is enactment.

Will the parliamentary secretary please acknowledge that being the reality?

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the refugee appeal division is provided for and is something that would require enactment. That essentially is what the bill allows. It is another layer put forward by members that would extend the whole process by an additional five months. Presently it sometimes takes five, six or seven years to determine the outcome of a specific case. By adding another layer and not fixing the rest, all we would be doing is simply adding more time to a process that is already not proceeding as efficiently as it should. That process will be there.

In addition to all the existing processes and that process, this motion is asking for yet another process. If a negative decision is received, it could be appealed with leave to the Federal Court of Appeal and perhaps the Supreme Court of Canada. This would be yet another layer in a due process system that already takes years, not months. That simply is not appropriate.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I had not planned on doing so, but in light of the questions that have been asked and the quality of the parliamentary secretary's responses, I would like to ask the following question.

It seems we are talking about a lengthy process—one that takes time. Could the parliamentary secretary explain to us the measures that the government has taken and also tell us how many decision-makers are currently assigned to the immigration appeal division and refugee appeal division? Recent information indicates that more than one-third of the positions are not filled. Is the backlog that the appeal division is faced with not simply the result of poor management by the government?

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, obviously there needs to be a decision maker to decide if a refugee is a true refugee, someone at risk of being tortured, at risk of losing his or her life, or at risk of receiving cruel and unusual treatment.

When we took office there were nearly 100 vacancies. Our government has appointed over 100 individuals to adjudicator positions. Those individuals are required to go through a new process that our government established to ensure appropriate qualifications. Due diligence is used. Those going through the process must now pass an objective examination to ensure that they meet a certain level before they go on to other steps. Those people going to those positions must go through that process.

Notwithstanding that process, we have made over 100 appointments to various positions. We will continue to make appointments to ensure those positions are filled.

• (1145)

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure you are aware that I as well tabled a notice of motion to concur in the same committee report.

As I rise today to offer my thoughts and reflections on this very important issue, I am reminded of a speech delivered by the former prime minister, the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien, regarding Canada's decision not to take part in the war in Iraq. In 2003 the former prime minister said:

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand today to support the motion before the House, a principled motion where we reaffirm our decision not to participate in the war in Iraq—

From the beginning, Canada took a stand against military intervention in Iraq. Canada's position was to work collectively through the United Nations to accomplish the objectives we shared with our allies, those of disarming Saddam Hussein and working toward enhanced human rights, the international rule of law, as well as peace in the region.

As an independent country, Canada decided not to send troops into battle. As the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien said in an address to the House of Commons:

The decision on whether or not to send troops into battle must always be a decision of principle, not a decision of economics, not even a decision of friendship, alone.

A decision not to engage in war was the right decision, a decision that Canadians strongly supported. It was a defining moment in our nation's history. In the fight against global terrorism and other exceptionally trying challenges, we have always supported a multilateral approach. As a nation, we must have confidence in our principles and trust that our sound values will guide our decisions and actions.

Although Canada did not support the war in Iraq, we share the same fundamental goals as our allies. We believe in international peace and security. As in 2003 our belief in peace, justice and freedom and the hope for a better tomorrow are no different today.

The matter before the House is one that inspires sympathy, concern and support among the vast majority of Canadians. It is important to listen to the voice of Canadians who have expressed

support and understanding for this cause. Over the last few years a growing number of people have left the United States of America's military refusing to fight in the war in Iraq. Some of them are seeking sanctuary in Canada. Dozens of U.S. war resisters have sought refuge in Canada and more individuals continue to arrive every month.

Canada has a proud history of welcoming war resisters. In fact, during the Vietnam war, over 50,000 Americans came here. Unfortunately on May 21, 2008, war resister Corey Glass was told that his application to stay in Canada has been rejected and now faces deportation. Glass would be the first Iraq war resister to be deported from Canada.

Today I would like to discuss this matter as it affects individuals who have been living in Canada and contributing to the social and economic fibre of this country. I would also like to share with the House the views expressed by the witnesses who presented their case before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

In fact, it is important to note that after hearing from groups and individuals on the matter of U.S. war resisters seeking refuge in Canada, the committee adopted a motion on December 6 recommending that the government immediately implement a program to allow conscientious objectors and their families to stay in Canada. It also calls for an immediate halt to the deportation proceedings in these cases.

• (1150)

The third report, adopted by the committee on December 11, 2007 and presented to the House on December 13, 2007, reads as follows:

In accordance with its mandate pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), your Committee has considered the issue of Iraq war resisters.

The Committee recommends that the government immediately implement a program to allow conscientious objectors and their immediate family members (partners and dependents), who have refused or left military service related to a war not sanctioned by the United Nations and do not have a criminal record, to apply for permanent resident status and remain in Canada; and that the government should immediately cease any removal or deportation actions that may have already commenced against such individuals.

This report served as a sign of hope and an important step forward for conscientious objectors. It demonstrated a willingness on behalf of the opposition parties in Canada's Parliament to come together to ensure that none of these individuals would be returned to the U.S. where they would face potential court martial, incarceration and possible deployment to Iraq.

Let me tell the House the story of one of the witnesses who the committee heard from during a hearing on this issue. The committee had the opportunity of meeting with Mr. Phillip McDowell, a former sergeant in the United States army. Mr. McDowell had volunteered for the army shortly after the tragic events that occurred on September 11 because he felt that his country was under attack.

Mr. McDowell said:

*Routine Proceedings*

I didn't join or volunteer to take part in an illegal war or a war of aggression.... When I came back from Iraq, I was determined not to have any part in this at all. I determined that when my contract was up with the military, when my volunteer service was over, I was going to separate and not be in the military anymore. However, after I did that in June 2006, I was called back into service involuntarily under the army's Stop Loss policy. I was told that I was going to have a 15-month tour in Iraq. I told my chain of command that I disagreed with the war and that I didn't want to go....I tried to contact my elected officials to explain to them how I felt about that. They said, sorry, there were a lot of people in the same situation, that I didn't have a choice, and that I was going to Iraq.

There are many other resisters in Canada who have come to seek refuge. Among them are Patrick Hart, an army sergeant with nine years of service, Chuck Wylie who was chief petty officer with 17 years of service, Dean Walcott who was a field marine deployed in the initial invasion of Iraq, Kim Rivera, a mother of two who was told by her recruiter that women were rarely deployed to combat zones. Less than a year later, she was in Iraq, unable to cope with the abuse and indiscriminate violence she witnessed. Among others was Jeremy Hinzman who applied for conscientious objector status. He asked for non-combat duty and was denied.

People may ask what is the stop loss policy? Let me explain. In the United States military, stop loss, as Mr. McDowell explains, is the involuntary extension of a service member's active duty service under the enlistment contract in order to retain them beyond their initial end of term service date.

The problem for individuals such as Mr. McDowell is the military service has in fact become involuntary. Many conscientious objectors, such as Phillip McDowell, come to Canada much like the soldiers who deserted during the Vietnam war in search of shelter and safety. In fact, former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau welcomed such soldiers as he believed that Canada should be a refuge from military.

Another reason for individuals refusing to fight in a war in Iraq and seeking refuge in Canada is their knowledge that Canada did not participate in the Iraq war.

● (1155)

According to Mr. McDowell:

—knowing, myself, that the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in 2004, declared the war illegal, I felt it was right for me to move to Canada to take this decision.

Mr. McDowell further stated:

—many people say there are no deserters doing time. Many people say they receive less than honourable discharges. However, a quick search on the Internet will show you that Sergeant Kevin Benderman deserted and served 15 months, bad conduct discharge; Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejia was sentenced to one year, bad conduct discharge; Stephen Funk was sentenced to six months, bad conduct discharge; Ivan Brobeck was sentenced to eight months, bad conduct discharge; Mark Wilkerson was sentenced to seven months, bad conduct discharge.

The problem with such cases, as Mr. McDowell explained:

—bad conduct discharge is a felony conviction, on your record for the rest of your life because you didn't want to take part in a war that you believed was illegal.

During the same committee meeting, Gay Anne Broughton, an individual representing the organization Canadian Friends Service Committee, presented evidence in support of conscientious objectors. Ms. Broughton explained:

The right to conscientious objection to military service derives from the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. It can be based on religious, ethical, moral, philosophical, humanitarian, or related motives. These rights are captured in

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 18, and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, also article 18. Canada is a signatory to both and includes these rights in its Constitution.

According to Ms. Broughton's testimony:

These instruments assert that these rights apply to everyone. Conscientious objection to military service is a legitimate exercise of this right, and a decision by the UN Human Rights Committee in 2006 in favour of two conscientious objectors from the Republic of Korea put to rest any question of that.

In addition, she noted:

Military personnel, whether volunteer or conscript, can develop a conscientious objection. Resolution 1998/77 of the UN human rights commission recognized this. That resolution puts no limits on whether the objection is to all war or to a particular war. Indeed, it is most often through experience itself that many basic human attributes, including conscience, are developed....Soldiers who are uninformed of their rights and do not have access to an independent assessment process are left with the choice to desert or to violate their conscience, which is perhaps the most sacred aspect of being human.

Ms. Broughton also pointed out that under the UN High Commission for Refugees handbook, paragraph 170, conscientious objectors qualified as refugees. The paragraph states as follows:

There are, however, also cases where the necessity to perform military service may be the sole ground for a claim to refugee status, i.e. when a person can show that the performance of military service would have required his participation in military action contrary to his genuine political, religious or moral convictions, or to valid reasons of conscience.

Ms. Broughton explained that the published record and testimony given in hearings in courts showed that these young men and women met this requirement and according to paragraph 171 of the handbook, their right to asylum hinged on the military action they were objecting to being condemned by the international community.

As I mentioned earlier, the witness, Phillip McDowell, explained how in this case the Iraq war was indeed condemned by the international community.

● (1200)

On the same issue, it is important to remember that following the second world war, the Nuremberg tribunal set out important principles of international law. Those principles established that soldiers had a moral duty, not a choice, to refuse to carry out illegal orders.

The United Nations formulated the elements of morality and conscience, as set out in the Nuremberg principle, into international law.

The government has a very important choice. It is really not compelled to force these individuals to go back to a country where they may face prosecution under military law, or may be permanently branded for making a principled decision.

Five years ago I believe the Liberal government made a principled decision not to participate in a war that was not sanctioned by the United Nations. I personally feel we should not punish individuals and their families for making the same decision based on their personal principles. Fairness and justice is all about that.

Perhaps this is an uncomfortable position for the government to be in. Observers of Canada's political scene and Canadians would remember the present Prime Minister's position on the war in Iraq. Therefore, I can understand why there would be some concern about the position on war resisters, and I can appreciate that.

*Routine Proceedings*

I can appreciate that it would create division within government if, by any chance, some members of the Conservative Party were to get on their feet and stand up for what I believe is fairness and justice to individuals seeking fairness and justice. I understand all that, but there comes a time when parliamentarians must stand up for what we believe, where fundamental rights are being challenged, and say to these individuals that, yes, they can stay.

As I said, we should not punish individuals and their families for making the same decisions based on their personal principles.

I ask the members of the House to support our endeavour as a committee of Parliament. We took the time to listen to individuals in need. They want help from us. Above all, we want to bring hope, fairness and, most of all, justice to them. This motion is all about that. The committee stands for justice for people in need of justice.

● (1205)

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask this hon. member three questions, and I will make a comment as well.

First, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees handbook calls for a consideration or determination whether a resister was drafted or joined voluntarily. I want to know if he thinks there should be a distinction between the two or not.

Second, reference was made to the fact that persons who applied had not taken advantage of the procedural options available to them in their country, in this particular case, the United States. Would the member agree that before a process is instituted due process should be followed and procedural options taken advantage of?

Third, the motion calls for a new program and I think the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party are always open to more new programs. However, if he were to suggest that a new program should be undertaken, would he prevent applications from being made under the basis of a refugee or would he still want to have the same processes that are available to make an application as a refugee and, alongside that, if there was a failure in a positive decision, that the program should also be implemented, or is one exclusive to the other, knowing that presently if a negative decision is received with respect to the determination of refugee, the person can apply by leave and with leave to the Federal Court, the Supreme Court of Canada, and if that fails and the person gets a negative decision, the person can apply under humanitarian and compassionate grounds, and that would be notwithstanding a negative decision? Is he saying that this new program should take the place of that or is he saying in addition to that?

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, I am a bit suspicious about the positioning of the Conservative Party on this particular issue because I think it is really related to the Prime Minister's position on the war in Iraq, which, I believe, makes members, even of the Conservative Party, a little uncomfortable.

I will read the motion for clarification. It states:

The Committee recommends that the government immediately implement a program to allow conscientious objectors and their immediate family members (partners and dependents), who have refused or left military service related to a war not sanctioned by the United Nations and do not have a criminal record, to apply for permanent resident status and remain in Canada; and that the government should

immediately cease any removal or deportation actions that may have already commenced against such individuals.

If the hon. member had read it, which I am sure he has because we have debated this particular issue and the opposition party actually joined forces to address this issue, then he would have the answer to his own question.

However, I understand that for the hon. member this may be a technical issue, but it is not for us in the sense that we understand that these individuals we are dealing with, war resisters and conscientious objectors, are driven by values like honour, respect and dignity—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Order, please. I need to stop the hon. member there in order to allow a few more members to ask questions or make comments.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak today about three conscientious objectors, war resisters, who live in London, Ontario, and tell very briefly one story about Josh Randall who enlisted in 2006.

Josh came from a very economically depressed area and his family was in difficulty. He wanted training to be a medic and the U.S. military offered that training. He believed he would be defending his country but he was shipped off to Iraq. In Iraq, he experienced some quite traumatic things, including going on the late night raiding parties. As a young 18-year-old, he was taken on one of these late night raiding parties.

What happens on these raids is that explosives are put around the door of a house where it is suspected there might be men and the door is blown inward.

Josh was with three others when they went to this house. When the door exploded inward, a 10-year-old female was hit with shrapnel and wood splinters in the face, neck and abdomen. Josh wanted to help her because, as a medic, he knew that if he did not help her she would die. The sergeant said “No, no. We haven't time for this.” Josh left the military because he knew that was happening over and over again.

Is there no compassion for these young people? During the Vietnam War, we, in Canada, allowed conscientious objectors to stay. Why not now?

● (1210)

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Mr. Speaker, we have all heard stories like that, which is why we strongly support the report from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The support for war resisters in this country can be found everywhere. I was just speaking to the hon. member for London West who will be attending a rally in support of war resisters.

*Routine Proceedings*

It is very unfortunate that, while the support for war resisters grows exponentially throughout the country and while the vast majority of Canadians support their stay here in Canada, the Conservative government has failed to recognize that Canadians are behind war resisters and want them to stay. Canadians describe these individuals as people with strong ideals of humility, good judgment, moral character, dignity and principle. It is about time the Conservative government began to recognize that reality.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pride that I stand as being one of the people who actually moved this motion. However, I want to go over the motion to ensure we understand that this is not regarding the war resisters in the United States and what is happening in Iraq.

The motion states:

The Committee recommends that the government immediately implement a program to allow conscientious objectors and their immediate family members (partners and dependents), who have refused or left military service related to a war not sanctioned by the United Nations....

There are other theatres of war. While we are so preoccupied with what is happening just south of the border of us with the United States and its military presence in Iraq, there are theatres of war where a country like Turkey is occupying the northern part of Cyprus, and other areas like that. So this particular motion is broad enough to catch those areas.

Should somebody from Turkey not want to be occupying the northern part of Cyprus, should somebody from another country whose country is illegally occupying another territory or another country that is not sanctioned by the United Nations, should they decide that they do not want to be part of this war, and then that individual comes to Canada, should we also not give them the same thing?

I am just wondering if my hon. colleague would give us a bit of light as to what is happening with those other countries.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of this debate and because of the clear wording of the motion that we are debating, I will read the motion, which states:

The Committee recommends that the government immediately implement a program to allow conscientious objectors and their immediate family members...who have refused or left military service related to a war not sanctioned by the United Nations and do not have a criminal record, to apply for permanent resident status and remain in Canada; and that the government should immediately cease any removal or deportation actions that may have already commenced against such individuals.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt has raised a similar point in committee, as he has today in the House, and I am sure he will continue to do so as we continue to study these very important issues related to conscientious objectors and Canada's role within the international community.

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary for Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I take the member as a very sincere and dedicated member. I do not question his motives in his comments at all.

However, I do ask if he could help us to understand his perspective when it comes to the honour, dignity and principle that the people had when they voluntarily signed up for their stint in the army and the fact that they did that voluntarily, the fact that any

nation must be able to depend on the people in its armed forces to carry out the direction as given by the government of the day.

I wonder if he would not agree that the honour, dignity and principles with which the people signed up certainly should be carried through to the end of their term while they are actually in the army of their country. Otherwise, how in the world can any nation depend on their armed forces?

• (1215)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. member for Vaughan has only about 20 seconds left.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua:** Mr. Speaker, since I do only have 20 seconds left, and I also appreciate the sincerity with which the hon. member has posed the question, I would like to direct him, as well, to very quickly study the stop loss provision and he will understand our concerns on that issue as well.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak today and return to my first love. In fact, until just recently, I was the Bloc Québécois citizenship and immigration critic. It is therefore a pleasure for me to talk about an issue that is close to the hearts of many Quebecers and Canadians. Moreover, a number of young people from my riding, Vaudreuil-Soulanges, are here today, and I will have the opportunity to talk to them and discuss this issue. I would therefore like to thank my colleagues for giving us the opportunity to hold a debate today about conscientious objectors.

The deportation order against Corey Glass, a deserter from the war in Iraq who is living in the Toronto area, has reopened the debate. I am happy about what I have heard here from the opposition members. My friends from Vaughan and Scarborough—Agincourt, as well as my NDP colleagues, have described the cases that are before us and about which groups are asking parliamentarians to make a decision. In my opinion, this is a political decision that could change the course of these people's lives. The principle on which their claims are based is laudable and justifiable, as the member for Vaughan said in his speech.

The Bloc Québécois endorses the committee report on the issue of conscientious objectors. The motion that was adopted reads as follows:

The Committee recommends that the government immediately implement a program to allow conscientious objectors and their immediate family members (partners and dependents), who have refused or left military service related to a war not sanctioned by the United Nations and do not have a criminal record, to apply for permanent resident status and remain in Canada; and that the government should immediately cease any removal or deportation actions that may have already commenced against such individuals.

This would apply until the issue had been discussed and solutions had been found.

I would now like to talk about certain factors which support war resisters.

*Routine Proceedings*

In the past three years, people opposed to the U.S. war in Iraq who have been living here in Canada have had the opportunity to talk to a number of people here. About 50 people living here have been involved. I would like to commend them on having the courage to uphold principles of international law, principles of solidarity and humanitarian principles. These are great values shared by the parliamentarians here.

I do not want their words to be forgotten. These people came to speak to us. In their opinion, the war in Iraq is illegal and immoral. Some came to that conclusion after their experience on the ground in Iraq, while others came to that same conclusion based on what they read, namely accounts by other soldiers who have returned from Iraq. Their claims were also backed by certain facts and events, including Colin Powell's outburst.

This is a sensitive issue because it affects our relationship with the United States and could also affect our relationships with other countries. As far as the issue of conscientious objectors is concerned, one of the basic problems that always brings us back to this type of debate is the lack of clear direction in Canada's foreign policy.

• (1220)

This policy has not been implemented for almost 10 years.

Other factors at play include the review of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act following the attacks in 2001. Instead of allowing the borders to remain open for humanitarian or family reasons, Canada stepped up its border controls and increased its munitions. It is closing its borders and fewer and fewer refugee claims on humanitarian grounds are being properly considered here in Canada.

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act poses a basic problem. The Bloc Québécois was opposed to it then for the same reasons it is now. Our evidence shows that we were right at the time.

Since the 1990s, the global economy and the international political scene have had their share of upheavals that have had an impact on Canada's role in the world. For the past 10 years, the Government of Canada has not conducted an in-depth public review of its foreign policy and its defence policy. A policy incorporates the values we want to defend and the principles on which we can make our decisions, whether it is a matter of regulations or other measures. A real reform is needed, preceded by real consultations with the elected members.

Nowadays, issues are being brought up one by one. That is why people get the sense that everything is so complicated, and things get bogged down in endless processes and procedures.

Our Conservative Party colleague talked about what he would do with the soldiers and what would happen if we were to adopt a policy toward conscientious objectors. We already have a basic principle to inform our decisions. These considerations have to do with multilateralism and peacekeeping.

We have to consider Canada's position on the war in Iraq and base the decision we make today on that. These factors also influenced the decisions made by those who resisted the American war in Iraq.

Witnesses who appeared before the committee brought up three main points. First, in March 2003, the Canadian government decided not to send more troops to participate in the United States' invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Second, Canada welcomed resisters during the Vietnam war, a chapter in history that is relatively well known in the United States and that created a historical precedent.

The third point involved people who have been the subject of significant international media coverage and who made it possible for members of the American armed forces to gain access to information about what was really going on on the ground.

I would like to talk more about the Vietnam war. We have to put ourselves in the shoes of parliamentarians of the day. I had the text of the debates held in 1969 printed, and what people were saying back then in Parliament is the same as what we are hearing now. Some members were wondering about how to build soldiers' loyalty and deal with international relations with other countries. Others were worried that officers or soldiers who had committed serious crimes or crimes against humanity might wind up here in Canada.

• (1225)

But a policy was implemented at the time and thousands of deserters were able to come to Canada. This brings me to the question of immigration. At the time, the Immigration Act was different. When people submitted documents explaining their opinion and what led them to decide to be conscientious objectors, the act allowed them to apply here and those people were allowed normal entry to Canada.

I would also like to thank these people, because many of them had the courage to come and appear before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, precisely to tell us how they have contributed to this country by passing on pacifist and humanitarian values. Many are now emeritus professors at Canadian universities. I would therefore like to sincerely thank them, on behalf of deserters who were conscientious objectors, for their contributions. The committee concluded that the government could implement some measures. In this case, under existing legislation, these exceptional measures could allow conscientious objectors to come to Canada.

I do not know what time it was when I began my speech, but I would like to take this opportunity to remind this House that, this year, the United Nations made a specific commitment to peace. The Bloc Québécois defends Quebec's values and I believe many people in the other provinces also share the values generally espoused in Quebec, which include respect for the rights of individuals and of peoples, freedom, solidarity and peaceful resolution of conflicts. These values are deeply entrenched in Quebec and have been passionately expressed, for instance, during the debate surrounding the war in Iraq, which illustrates just how willing people are to denounce illegal wars.

We need only recall the 250,000 people who braved the cold to demonstrate in Montreal and the polls that showed major opposition to the war at that time. We managed to change political positions in terms of foreign affairs and our policy on the war in Iraq.

*Routine Proceedings*

We can now reaffirm these values because the United Nations has proclaimed 2001 to 2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. I think that this is a golden opportunity to educate and act in the spirit of non-violence and peace by recognizing the requests of these conscientious objectors and drawing on the wisdom of 1969. At that time, during the Vietnam War, Canada showed clemency and allowed thousands of people—I would like to speak of people and not cases—to establish themselves in Canada and make a positive contribution to the country.

• (1230)

I will wrap it up here and take questions.

We are in favour of conscientious objectors staying in Canada. We are in favour of creating a mechanism to examine their applications. We would like the House to have the same attitude as it had in 1969. The government must show leadership and recognize, once and for all, the events of the war in Iraq. It must develop a policy to recognize the rights of these people who, by the way, have worked hard for the recognition of their rights using the means available to them.

And that concludes my presentation.

[*English*]

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member talked about what happened in the sixties and seventies with the soldiers who did not want to fight in the Vietnam war.

In May 1969 the immigration department was opposed to giving military resisters and deserters a free passage to permanent residence in Canada. In July 1968, when Mr. Allan MacEachen became the minister of immigration, he put out a memo that said military deserters were not to be accepted because they had not kept their moral, legal and contractual obligations.

Subsequently, there was a huge outrage in Canada. Between July 1968 and May 1969, many Canadians said that was not acceptable. Canadians wanted these war resisters to stay in Canada. This was during the Vietnam war.

Subsequently, in May 1969, because of the outcry from ordinary Canadians, a memo was sent out by the minister of immigration which said that whether they were military deserters or draft resisters, whether they volunteered for service or were drafted, it did not matter, they were now allowed to stay in Canada. That was in May 1969. In November 1972 every person was allowed and there was a general amnesty for all people.

The situation right now is close to being identical to the time of the war in Vietnam, which in my mind was an illegal war. The war in Iraq was certainly not sanctioned by the United Nations. There is absolutely no difference between these two wars. Because of those reasons, should we not allow war resisters to stay in Canada?

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Meili Faille:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

When I made the comparison between the Vietnam war and the situation now, I was reminded that the comments made today on both sides of this House, and particularly by the government and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, are similar to the ones made at the time by the people in those same positions. The arguments are the same.

The fact is that this is a political decision that needs to be made by the government. The government needs to take action and propose solutions to resolve the issue of conscientious objectors.

As for what my colleague was saying, I would refer to an article that can easily be found. I found references to the legislation in an article that appeared in the *Toronto Daily Star* on May 22, 1969. It explains the decision made by the government of the day to no longer differentiate between draft dodgers and deserters seeking refuge in Canada. One can see the excerpt where the immigration minister at the time declared that the applications would be examined by Canada.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have posed a number of questions to the various speakers, none of whom have answered the questions directly. I hope this member will.

There is no doubt that many cases have humanitarian and compassionate grounds within them. We have a process that allows for humanitarian and compassionate grounds applications, separate and apart from the determination as to whether a person is a refugee.

As for the program that she proposes in the motion, does she suggest that if people apply under the program they would not have the benefit of the application for refugee protection, as refugees? Would they not be allowed to make an application under humanitarian and compassionate grounds? I notice that the program is limited to those who do not have a criminal record. Would the member then say that the refugee protection system as we now have it on humanitarian and compassionate grounds should be reserved for those who have criminal records? That is my first question.

Second, before either the refugee protection system or the humanitarian and compassionate grounds application is utilized, or the program that the member suggests is in place, would it be incumbent upon the applicant, or necessary, to have exhausted the procedural options available in the country of origin? Or does it matter whether the person has applied under the procedural options available in that country and has exhausted the process there? Would it matter whether, in the first instance, a person was drafted or volunteered?

Those are very specific questions. I would like to have the member answer them if she could.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Meili Faille:** Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to answer this question. In the past few years, we have become accustomed to seeing the Conservative government abandon Canadians abroad, bog us down in procedures, never-ending court cases and appeals, and then avoid the major issues so as to not have to consider, debate or discuss them in this House.

*Routine Proceedings*

I was a member of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration and I have never seen such a right-wing, inflexible government with respect to the issue of immigration. We currently find ourselves in a situation where foreign policy has not been reviewed, the government is taking a controversial military direction and it refuses to put in place mechanisms to deal with exceptions. There are no options, because the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act was amended in 2001. We keep hearing the same argument—that people have to apply on compassionate and humanitarian grounds.

If only you knew, Mr. Speaker, how much of a catch-all this program has become. There are about 14 or 15 processes for an application on compassionate and humanitarian grounds. Some of the reasons are family reunification, denied applications for refugee status and individuals facing moratoriums.

People could possibly use that program. However, there is one problem: by sending all applications to this humanitarian and compassionate program, the program lacks limits. The parliamentary secretary did not mention the rate of refusal for people who opt for this program, as well as its inefficiency.

The issue of resisters is a very serious one. The government should examine it and develop a policy.

● (1240)

[English]

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if the men were to return to the United States, they would likely be court-martialled. If they were found to be deserters, they would likely be sentenced to jail terms of one to five years. They would not be able to get mortgages because they would have criminal records. There is really no reason for us to inflict this kind of treatment on these war resisters.

In Canada, unfortunately, in 2005 the immigration appeal board said that Mr. Hinzman decided to desert. Jeremy Hinzman was the first person to apply for refugee status. He decided to desert because he was opposed to the U.S. military incursion into Iraq. That was the reason why the board did not accept his refugee status. Had he opposed the war generally—

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

**Ms. Meili Faille:** Mr. Speaker, for several decades now, after several wars of aggression, people have learned some lessons about human rights, freedom of expression and the sovereignty of nations. Soldiers have learned that “I was just following orders” is not an acceptable excuse.

I think that Canada should allow these people to come here to live the values they share with the people of Quebec and Canada. I will end on that note because I have no more time left.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to participate in this debate. I am not going to quote the third report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, which we are debating today, because many of the members who spoke before me have read it word for word.

I am a woman and a lawyer, and I tend to try to find solutions when problems arise. I listened to the parliamentary secretary to the minister ask if our way of seeing things should change depending on whether the person is a volunteer who enlisted in a country's armed forces or someone carrying out mandatory military service.

Should we consider the report's recommendation to set up a special program that would offer special treatment, compared to other people who come here and apply for refugee status or those who submit normal immigration applications?

Would that give an unfair advantage to American soldiers who decide to come here rather than continue serving with the army in Iraq?

● (1245)

[English]

I see it as much larger than that, because a lot of the government members have really homed in on the fact that it is American war resisters who have come to Canada and who have made claims for refugee status. They are saying that for the government to somehow facilitate their staying in Canada and to regularize their legal status in Canada would confer upon them a privilege that we do not give to anyone else.

Therefore, I looked at the law, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. In looking at that law, I realized that there are different sections that the government can actually use if it so wishes.

Before I get to that, Mr. Speaker, I will note that I am pleased to split my time with the member for Kitchener—Waterloo. I forgot to say that.

I received an email yesterday from a Mr. Griffin Carpenter, who writes:

As you may be aware, Iraq war resister and AWOL soldier, Corey Glass, has been asked by Canadian officials to leave Canada by June 12, 2008. This decision goes against the recommendation made on December 6, 2007 by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. Canadians are outraged with the failure of the government to act timely enough to stop this first deportation as the Iraqi war was unsanctioned by the UN and opposed by Canada. Do you support the [committee] recommendation and do you believe that an appropriate bill should come before the House?

I look forward to hearing your response.

In part what I am going to say today is in fact my response. First, I support the committee report and I will vote in favour of it. Second, I also support the government actually taking action. One of the ways the government can in fact take action is to recognize resolution 1998/77 of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, which recognized that military personnel, whether volunteers or conscripts, can develop a conscientious objection.

That specific resolution actually puts no limits as to whether the objection is to all war in general. We do have members of the House, and Canadians, who believe that all war is wrong. We have others who believe that there may and can be and have been just wars.

*Routine Proceedings*

However, the United Nations Human Rights Commission resolution recognized that whether the objection is to all war or to a particular war, it is in fact most often in the actual experience of war that many basic human attributes, including conscience, are developed.

We also know that many states clearly recognize that members of voluntary armies can and do develop conscientious objection. The reason we know it is that in their military acts or national defence acts those states actually have provisions that in some cases allow that objector to seek a discharge. However, if we look at Iraq, the United States policy does not quite align with that.

How can the Canadian government, the Conservative government, actually help war resisters, whether they are from the United States or from another country, to regularize their situation in Canada and provide them with legal status to remain in Canada, recognizing that individual persons can develop conscientious objection to war in general or to a particular war precisely because they have themselves now experienced it?

Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, there is section 25. Section 25 actually states that for various humanitarian reasons, including reasons of “public policy”, a person may establish humanitarian grounds.

• (1250)

Let me give an example of one such public policy that a previous government established and as a result allowed a whole class of people claiming refugee status, who were being consistently refused by the IRB, to be received and have their claims accepted. Those are victims of domestic violence.

There are countries and states where women, as victims of domestic violence, receive absolutely no assistance from the state or from the law enforcement within that country, in some cases because the country and state itself does not recognize domestic violence. In other cases, the state may under its law recognize it but is unwilling to actually apply the law.

There were cases back in the early 1990s and the mid-1990s of women coming from, for instance, Guyana and other Caribbean countries, and from some African countries and South American countries who fled their country because they were subject to domestic violence. They had reasonable grounds to believe that their lives, health and safety was in danger and that they could not seek protection from the law enforcement there.

The IRB, with the initial claims, rejected them and said, no, there is a law against assault in that particular country, but the Canadian government at that time, in its wisdom, recognized that although here in Canada our law enforcement and judicial system do take the issue of domestic violence seriously, that is not the case in all countries.

Canada issued a public policy that if individuals were making a claim for refugee status and these individuals were able to establish that they had a well-founded belief of persecution as victims and were victims of domestic violence, and were unable to receive protection from their government, either because the government was unwilling or unable to provide that protection, that it was grounds for humanitarian acceptance of their claim. Since that time

women who have been able to make the case have had their claims accepted.

We know that the United Nations, in its refugee handbook at paragraph 170 states:

There are, however, also cases where the necessity to perform military service may be the sole ground for a claim to refugee status, i.e. when a person can show that the performance of military service would have required his participation in military action contrary to his genuine political, religious or moral convictions, or to valid reasons of conscience.

The Conservative government simply has to issue a directive stating that it is now public policy that any person making a claim for refugee status who is able to show that they have a conscientious objection to a war or a war in general may have their claim accepted. That is really simple. That is section 25 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. I offer it—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Questions and comments. Resuming debate. The hon. member for Kitchener—Waterloo.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate. Let me say that this was an issue that we debated, and thought long and hard about at the citizenship and immigration committee. I remember when my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas first broached the topic that there was initially not a great deal of support. However, we talked about the issue. Afterwards, the committee came out with its report which is now before this House and is asking the House to concur in the majority report of the citizenship and immigration committee.

Having listened to the debate, I want to touch on a few cases where this issue has a historical background when we are talking about people seeking refuge in Canada rather than engaging in combat, doing military service and going to war.

The first case we had in our history was in 1793 when the First Assembly of Upper Canada passed a law exempting Quakers, Mennonites and Tunkers from military duty. This cleared the way for thousands of these people to arrive in Ontario and Canada.

In 1877 there was a large number of German Mennonites living in Russia that expressed an interest in moving to Canada to settle on the Prairies. The government passed an order in council confirming that they too could be exempted from military service.

In 1898-99 the government passed similar orders in council for Doukhobors and Hutterites respectively, thereby facilitating the arrival of more newcomers to the western Prairies.

This whole issue of offering refuge in this country relates to those who are against compulsory military service or against military service where they might have volunteered, but found out during the course of their duty that they were engaged in an illegal war and the cause that they were fighting for was not the cause that they originally joined up for and subsequently developed a conscientious objection.

*Routine Proceedings*

We do not have to go very far away to show that the issue relates to the war in Iraq and how the administration of the United States misled the American people. Yesterday, we had the reports from the former press secretary to President Bush, who made the allegation that indeed while he was the press secretary and having reflected on the matter, it was an exercise in deception in terms of getting the American public behind the war in Iraq.

The fact that the president's former press secretary is now under attack by associates of the White House is not surprising. If we think back to the timeframe of the Iraq war and the debate that raged throughout the world, where the world community was pleading with the United States not to take unilateral action, that was not to happen.

The United States did invade Iraq with the coalition of the willing. I must say that the ranks of the coalition of the willing has shrunk a great deal. We are now talking about the United States standing virtually alone in Iraq.

● (1255)

The motion we are debating today could very easily be the same action as that taken by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who stated in regard to the Vietnam war:

Those who make the conscientious judgment that they must not participate in this war...have my complete sympathy, and indeed our political approach has been to give them access to Canada. Canada should be a refuge from militarism.

When Prime Minister Jean Chrétien made the courageous decision and the right decision that Canada was not going to engage in the war in Iraq, he and the Liberal government were attacked by the leader of the Canadian Alliance, the present Prime Minister, and the present day public security minister, who was also with the Canadian Alliance at that time. I quote from a letter they sent to the *Wall Street Journal*:

Today, the world is at war. A coalition of countries under the leadership of the U.K. and the U.S. is leading a military intervention to disarm Saddam Hussein. Yet Prime Minister Jean Chrétien has left Canada outside this multilateral coalition of nations. This is a serious mistake. For the first time in history, the Canadian government has not stood beside its key British and American allies in their time of need.

The Canadian Alliance—the official opposition in parliament—supports the American and British position because we share their concerns, their worries about the future if Iraq is left unattended to, and their fundamental vision of civilization and human values. Disarming Iraq is necessary for the long-term security of the world, and for the collective interests of our key historic allies and therefore manifestly in the national interest of Canada.

Make no mistake, as our allies work to end the reign of Saddam and the brutality and aggression that are the foundations of his regime, Canada's largest opposition party, the Canadian Alliance will not be neutral. In our hearts and minds, we will be with our allies and friends. And Canadians will be overwhelmingly with us.

We do not need to have people coming to Canada and asking for refuge because they do not want to participate in a war that has been judged to be an illegal war.

Canada likes to think of itself as a peacekeeper, and Canadians are most comfortable in that role that Canada plays in the world. As we all know, it was Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, prior to becoming prime minister, who received the Nobel peace prize for inventing peacekeeping. That peacekeeping situation with the blue berets came into play in the Suez.

We ask the government to stand up and make a decision to support people who seek not to serve in unjust wars and people who are against serving in wars. That is the right thing to do. That is what the Canadian public overwhelmingly expects us to do. I believe the American public does the same.

● (1300)

Look at the support for the president who led the United States into war, which is recorded in history. To their chagrin, the American people realized, unfortunately too late, that this war has had a tremendous cost to the social, economic and moral values of the United States of America.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have asked a series of questions from a number of members who spoke today and have not received a direct answer to any one of those questions. I wonder if the hon. member will make it a less than perfect record by directly answering any one of the following questions.

First, is the program proposed in addition to, or in lieu of, the present program we have for refugee protection and application for refugee protection for humanitarian and compassionate grounds?

Second, does it matter whether the applicant was drafted or volunteered for service?

Third, would it be incumbent to ensure that the procedural options that are available in the country of origin are actually used before an application is made?

I notice that the program they want to implement would not apply to those who might have a criminal record. For those who do have a criminal record, does the member propose that they be entitled to apply under our current refugee protection system on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, which provides for a hearing in the first instance and eventually leave to appeal to the federal court and, with leave, an actual hearing before the federal court and leave to appeal to the Supreme Court?

A direct answer to any one of those questions would be appreciated, to see if we could get a less than perfect record.

● (1305)

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** Mr. Speaker, first, the government should apply a general policy that all the people who fit the motion are let in without any kind of refugee hearing to put them through the process.

When the current government came into office two years ago, less than 20,000 people were waiting in the backlog of refugee cases and that number was steadily dropping. Since the Conservative government came into office, those numbers are up to 45,000 and they are expected to be 62,000 by the end of the year. The refugee board system is in a crisis. As I said before, it is my belief that the government is growing the backlog in the refugee division because it wants to abolish that system. This goes with his first point. I want it as a general policy.

*Routine Proceedings*

On his second point, one can be drafted to go to fight in a just war. I believe many of the soldiers, just like many of the people who went to Vietnam and then became resisters, believed they were fighting in a just war. Once they got there and saw the reality on the ground, all of a sudden they did not want to do service because their conscience would not allow them to do that. There is a difference in fighting in a just war, fighting in an unjust war and fighting in an illegal war.

On his third point, he asked whether people with a criminal record should be able to go through the refugee determination system. For the small number who would be left, the answer is yes, probably under humanitarian compassionate considerations as well.

On our refugee determination system, because of action by it where it has refused to appoint IRB members, the government has created a crisis which threatens the very existence of the IRB. I really believe that is the ultimate goal of this government.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is a historic moment in the history of our country. We have a chance to make some history by taking a stand for justice and peace in this world as we charge our independent course.

We know our country has officially refused to fight in Iraq. Logic would have it then that we would support those who refuse to fight in this illegal invasion of a sovereign country. They need our support. I just met with Corey Glass who is facing deportation. I have met with other war resisters in my riding, in the town of Nelson. I have listened to their testimony in committee. I believe we have an obligation and responsibility to help these young people.

The argument often is that they volunteered, they chose to go. A lot of these people were deceived, and I will give a couple of examples.

The tenure of Mr. Glass, a native of Indiana, began in 2002 in the military when he joined the National Guard to complete “humanitarian work” within the United States, he was told. At that time, he had no idea he would end up fighting on foreign shores. When he joined the National Guard, he was told the only way he would be in combat was if there were troops occupying the United States. He signed up to defend people and do humanitarian work, such as filling sandbags if there was a hurricane. That was not what happened to Mr. Glass.

I met a young couple in Nelson. The young man was told if he signed up for the military, it would pay for his university education when he got back and it would give his wife health care. She was one of the 40 million people in the United States who did not have health care. What choice did he have? He had the promise of finally getting through school with some help and being provided medical assistance for his wife.

We have to put this in context. In the past we have supported those who did not want to fight or fled the United States because of the unjust war in Vietnam.

I will quote from a couple of letters. One is from Mr. Klaus Offerman of Nelson, who said that according to war resisters he talked to and according to former Iraq weapons inspector, Scott Ritter, the U.S. army used economic, educational and health care incentives to lure and pressure young, poor potential recruits into

military service before they understood the reality of military life and responsibility. Meanwhile, their commander-in-chief deceived them into thinking they had a just war and they were going to search out weapons of mass destruction.

Another one of my friends and constituents, Jennifer Voykin, states that she feels:

—we, as responsible and ethical Canadian citizens, have the opportunity, as well as an obligation, to protect the human rights of people who are morally opposed to the American-led invasion of Iraq. We must uphold international laws and support those deserters who seek refuge from military court martial in the United States. No deserter, including those that have already been issued Pre-removal Risk Assessments, should be removed from this country until the Supreme Court of Canada finalizes their decision.

• (1310)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** It is now my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

**Hon. Karen Redman:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that the vote be deferred to the end of government orders on Monday.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Accordingly the division on the motion stands deferred until the end of government orders on Monday.

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition signed by almost 100 petitioners.

*Routine Proceedings*

The petitioners are quite upset that the Conservative government has introduced major changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act in a budget implementation bill. They note that the bill would give major new powers to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, that it would have irreversible damage to the humanitarian compassionate tradition that Canada has had, that it would limit the ability of ordinary Canadians to be united, based on humanitarian compassionate grounds, with overseas family members and that it would give the minister and her officials the power to deny visas to those who have already qualified.

They call upon the Government of Canada to abandon the changes to her powers that were introduced as part of Bill C-50, the budget implementation bill, to increase staffing in overseas visa offices to deal with the immigration backlog, to increase Canada's immigration target to 1% of the Canadian population, which would be 330,000 new residents, to facilitate family reunification and meet labour needs and also to stop—

• (1315)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Order, please. I would remind members that they are supposed to provide a brief summary, not read all the wording in the petition when presenting petitions.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre.

## TEMPORARY WORKERS

**Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition to the House of Commons assembled from residents of my constituency of Calgary Centre and members and adherents of the congregation of Knox United Church in Calgary.

The petitioners are concerned with the plight of migrant farm workers in Canada and the well-documented abuse that so many of them suffer.

They call upon Parliament to take action to deal with these abuses and to implement measures to prevent future injustices from occurring.

## UNBORN VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I submit a petition which expresses profound concern regarding Bill C-484, the proposed unborn victims of crime act, because it conflicts with the Criminal Code and provides personhood to fetuses that would necessarily compromise women's established rights.

Violence against pregnant women, as members well know, is part of a larger societal problem of violence against women. Legal homicide laws elsewhere have done nothing to reduce this because they do not address the root inequalities that perpetuate the violence.

The best way to protect fetuses is to provide pregnant women the supports and resources they need for a good pregnancy outcome, including protection from domestic violence.

\* \* \*

## 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, the following question will be answered today: No. 245.

[English]

Question No. 245—**Hon. Marlene Jennings:**

With regard to the government's answer to written question Q-205, which was made an Order for Return and tabled on Wednesday, April 9, 2008, which of the listed criteria were deemed to have been met in determining that it was in the "public interest" to charge Janet Hinshaw-Thomas under Section 117 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in deciding whether to consent to the institution of proceedings under section 117 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, prosecutors apply the test set out in Chapter 15 of the Federal Prosecution Service Deskbook entitled "The Decision to Prosecute". First, the prosecutor must consider whether the evidence is sufficient to justify the institution of proceedings. If there is a reasonable prospect of conviction, the prosecutor must then consider whether the public interest requires a prosecution to be pursued. Not all offences for which there is sufficient evidence must be prosecuted. As the deskbook states, the proper decision in many cases will be to proceed with a prosecution if there is sufficient evidence available to justify a prosecution. Generally, the more serious the offence, the more likely the public interest will require that a prosecution be pursued.

In considering whether the public interest requires a prosecution, it is not a question of determining whether the factors listed in section 15.3.2 have been met. Rather the process is one of considering the general public interest with the factors listed, and the list is not exhaustive and the factors and their respective weight may vary from case to case, being taken into account to arrive at a general conclusion as to whether a prosecution is required.

The director of public prosecutions is accountable to the Attorney General of Canada for decisions made by federal prosecutors. Prosecutors are also accountable to the courts but the courts have indicated that they will not examine prosecutorial deliberations absent bad faith or flagrant impropriety. This is consistent with the principle of prosecutorial independence.,

Generally, prosecutors do not publicly disclose details of their deliberations that touch upon a core element of prosecutorial discretion such as the decision to institute or stay proceedings. However, the deskbook does recognize that in certain cases, confidence in the administration of justice is strengthened by publicly communicating a general explanation for not prosecuting. The case of Ms. Hinshaw-Thomas falls into this category.

*Government Orders*

In deciding whether to prosecute Ms. Hinshaw-Thomas, the regional director followed the “Decision-to-Prosecute” policy in the deskbook. After reviewing the evidence initially presented by the investigators, he concluded that there was sufficient evidence to justify a prosecution. He then considered whether the public interest required a prosecution. He examined the factors set out in section 15.3.2 including the general public interest in prosecuting given that a prosecution was justified on the evidence presented by the investigators, the seriousness of the alleged offence, the circumstances surrounding the alleged offence, Ms. Hinshaw-Thomas’ alleged degree of responsibility for the offence, and the prosecution’s likely effect on public confidence in the administration of justice. After considering the public interest based on the evidence before him, the regional director concluded that a prosecution was warranted.

After a charge had been laid, the investigators presented the regional director with new evidence. Consistent with his obligation to apply the evidentiary standard of “reasonable prospect of conviction” throughout the proceeding, the regional director reviewed the file in the light of this new evidence and concluded that the evidence no longer justified a prosecution. Given this conclusion, the public interest test did not enter into play. The proceedings were therefore stayed.

\* \* \*

[English]

**QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 258 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[English]

Question No. 258—**Hon. Larry Bagnell:**

With regard to the detection of ship source pollution for the years 2006, 2007 and 2008, to date: (a) what were the routes of patrols by Canada’s National Aerial Surveillance Program (CNASP) within Canada’s Arctic waters; (b) how many flights were conducted by the CNASP; (c) how many aircraft were used by the CNASP; (d) what was the total number of hours logged, in patrol time, by the CNASP; (e) what were the numbers of (i) hours of recorded inspection by the CNASP, (ii) vessels sighted by the CNASP, (iii) vessels inspected by the CNASP, (iv) mystery spills identified by the CNASP, (v) mystery spills investigated for origin of source by the CNASP, (vi) charges laid, (vii) convictions; (f) what was the amount of (i) fines and penalties levied, (ii) fines paid and penalties served; (g) what was the number of patrol incidences by the CNASP where survey was considered unsafe and what were the reasons for the unsafe determinations; (h) what were the total costs associated with the pollution patrol surveillance program; (i) what other methods does the government employ to monitor, track and prosecute pollution incidents in Canada’s Arctic waters; and (j) how many incidents have been reported by these other methods?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**NUCLEAR LIABILITY AND COMPENSATION ACT**

The House resumed from May 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident, be read the third time and passed.

**Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the bill once more.

I had the opportunity to speak to many amendments that my colleague, the member for Western Arctic, made at the natural resources committee on Bill C-5. I think about 35 amendments were moved, which, unfortunately, were not passed, that would have improved the bill and made it a bill we could support. Sadly, the NDP cannot support the bill in its present form.

The bill was introduced last year, sent to committee, where it was quickly shuffled through with no amendments, and now we have it before the House today.

The bill, in our estimation, was introduced to facilitate the development of the nuclear industry in Canada. The federal government developed the legislation to limit the amount of damages a nuclear power plant operator would have to pay out should there be an accident causing radiological contamination to property outside the plant area itself. Such legislation is deemed necessary, as private insurers refuse to compensate for damage due to a nuclear accident or incident.

As I said, we had many problems with the bill but the biggest one for us was the limit on the liability. The current legislation, as we know, dates from the 1970s. It is woefully inadequate, and we agree with that, with a liability limit of only \$75 million. By comparison, a new mine usually has to post an environmental bond of approximately \$50 million, and it does not have radiological contamination to worry about.

This low level of liability is creating an impediment for foreign private industry purchasing Canadian nuclear industries. Under U.S. law, a foreign victim of an accident caused by an American headquartered company can sue for damages under American law if the foreign law is insufficient by international standards. These changes bring the legislation in line with minimum international standards, which is \$650 million. We know the government brought this to the minimum international standards, the bottom of the international average.

For amounts above the \$650 million, a special tribunal would be set up by the Minister of Natural Resources and further funds would come out of the public purse, which is the taxpayers’ pockets. What that means is that a nuclear operator would only need to pay out the maximum of \$650 million, while the public would be on the hook for the rest, possibly millions or even billions of dollars in the case of a nuclear incident or accident.

*Government Orders*

My colleague and I presented amendments to the bill because we felt strongly that it was our duty as members of Parliament to look after the public good and the public interest. We do not believe taxpayers should be on the hook for billions of dollars in case of a nuclear accident.

I talked about the liability framework in the United States. Canada is moving from \$75 million, a woefully inadequate liability, up to \$650 million. However, in the U.S. the liability can be as high as \$9 billion. In other countries, such as Germany, Japan and Switzerland, they have unlimited liability. They understand that the costs of a nuclear accident outside of a nuclear facility could be devastatingly high. We know this because many of our reactors are in populated areas.

• (1320)

The Pickering reactors are located in a very densely populated area. Many of the businesses, homes and schools in the area are close enough that if there were a significant accident or incident, they could be negatively impacted to the tune of more than \$650 million. The price of homes in that area are quite high. The future incomes of businesses in the area could be at risk if the area were to become contaminated because people would not go into the area for years to come. All kinds of future costs could be implicated as well.

Those are the reasons we wanted to have unlimited liability, such as those in other European countries, or to at least have a \$9 billion liability, which is what it is in the U.S.

When the bill came to committee we heard from several witnesses. I would like to read what some of the witnesses had to say just to give members a sense of what we heard at the committee and why it is so difficult to support this bill in its present form.

The first witness, Professor Michel Duguay, from the electrical and computer engineering department at Laval University in Quebec City, said:

The new bill will send a signal to all stake holders and the public that nuclear power is expensive and dangerous. The U.S. commission that had investigated the nuclear accident at Three-Mile Island had found that the principal cause of the accident was the attitude held by the plant operators that the nuclear reactor was safe. In Canada, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission...has done a great deal to convince nuclear power plant operators at all levels that nuclear power must be approached with utmost precaution. In its Annual Report for 2002, page 6, Atomic Energy Canada Limited...has acknowledged that the old CANDUs' positive coolant void reactivity coefficient...poses a grave danger that must be avoided in the new reactor designs.

Those words strike fear in the hearts of many people when we hear them because we know what grave danger means in the case of a nuclear accident.

He goes on to say:

In view of the danger posed by the old CANDU reactors, and in view of the much larger damages anticipated in the case of core-meltdown accidents, anywhere from the 10 billion-dollar US liability limit to the one trillion-dollar estimate of the Pembina Institute in Canada...

What he was saying was that \$650 million was a drop in the bucket compared to the amounts of money that could be needed in the case of a major accident.

Professor Duguay continues to state:

I find that in formulating this new Bill C-5, there are two important aspects. One of them is compensation for damages suffered, and the other is the expansion of nuclear power.

What he was referencing was that the money was not enough, obviously, and that the expansion of nuclear power was an issue. We know the Minister of Natural Resources has told the committee that the government was looking at nuclear power as a clean energy source.

I find that quite interesting because that was raised during the committee's study of the tar sands. It was one of our first studies that I was on as a member of that committee.

• (1325)

That made me wonder whether the government was thinking of using nuclear in the oil sands to melt the tar to produce the bitumen that we are shipping daily to the U.S., using a form of energy that has its own particular problems, such as the disposal of the waste. The issue of nuclear waste has never been resolved in this country. Therefore, to call that a green, clean source of energy is a misnomer, and yet the government likes to look at nuclear as a way out of our greenhouse gas emissions.

That is something that needs to be highlighted here because we are investing, as saw in the last budget, in nuclear. The budget had quite a lot of money for nuclear but very little for real green alternatives, such as solar power, wind power, wave generation, geothermal and all kinds of things that truly are green, clean sources of energy that have very little impact and leave a much smaller footprint on our planet. The government should be supporting more of those sources of energy in this country.

If the passage of the bill allows the expansion of nuclear power in this country it will be a big step backward for us in our quest to have a greener and cleaner energy source in many ways. We need to ensure that it not only does not create greenhouse gases, which it does not in that respect, but we need to look at it for all other things, such as the waste, the mining that takes place and the tragedy, human and otherwise, that it could inflict if there were to be an accident. If it is not a green source of energy we should not invest in it so heavily. We should be thinking of much cleaner, greener ways to go.

Another witness who came before our committee was Gordon Edwards, the president of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility. He spoke to the committee and we met with him on a few occasions. In his submission to the committee, he said:

As a participant in the deliberations of both the Royal Commission on Electric Power Planning and the Select Committee on Ontario Hydro Affairs, I can assure the committee members that the rationale for this bill, C-5, is based on the potential damages of fuel melting accidents. Without fuel melting, it is not possible for a nuclear accident to have off-site property damage exceeding \$10 million.

However, the consequences of core melting accidents can typically run into the tens of billions of dollars or even hundreds of billions of dollars and can make large regions of land uninhabitable for a considerable period of time.

In the case of such a catastrophe, Bill C-5 limits the liability of nuclear operators to a very modest amount. It eliminates all liability for nuclear equipment suppliers, even if they supplied defective equipment that caused the accident, yet it does not address any important measures that would limit the overall financial liability to the Canadian taxpayer or the social liability of any affected population.

*Government Orders*

To me, that paragraph outlines many things: the insufficient liability amount and the long term effect on the human population, on businesses and on the taxpayer should there be a need to pay more than \$650 million in the case of an accident.

• (1330)

He mentioned that hundreds of billions of dollars in compensation could be required. Therefore, \$650 million is woefully inadequate. We have an opportunity now, when the bill is before us, to increase that limit from \$650 million, which is the base international standard, to a much higher amount so that Canadian taxpayers would not be on the hook.

Mr. Edwards further commented that:

The Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility feels that it is important for the elected representatives of the people to ensure that the nuclear industry is held publicly accountable, and to ensure that the best interests of Canadians are not compromised in order to serve the interests of the nuclear industry. We believe that the figure of \$650 million has no sound scientific or financial basis, and that this arbitrary amount serves to distract the Committee from a much more important question:—

I will stop there with that paragraph. Again, I have to say that it is the members of this House who are responsible for ensuring public security and safety, and also accountability with the public's money. If we were to agree to the bill and it were to pass, and there was a nuclear accident and taxpayers were on the hook for any moneys over the \$650 million, it would be on our heads. It would be because we allowed that to happen. We would be not just financially but morally responsible for making that decision. That would be a travesty. It is something that we ought not inflict on the Canadian public.

That is why for the most part we cannot support the bill. As I said earlier, the act needed to be updated. Currently, it is woefully inadequate with the amount at \$75 million. We have an opportunity now to increase the liability or not to have a cap of \$650 million so that the Canadian taxpayer will not be left on the hook.

The amendments we proposed at committee would have brought our country in line with countries, like Germany, where there is unlimited liability on their nuclear industries. Those amendments were important because they would encourage safety in the nuclear industry. They would make the nuclear industry more accountable. The industry would then be on the hook, not the taxpayer. Why are we putting the government's finances in jeopardy?

It is important to note that all Canadians want this Parliament to move toward cleaner, greener solutions for our energy needs. Unfortunately, this bill is going to pass, because it has Liberal and Conservative support, and it will increase nuclear power production around the country.

Instead, we could be investing much more in alternatives for our energy needs, things that would not have such an impact on the planet, things like solar power. We could help people invest in their homes to reduce their energy consumption. We do not seem to be doing much of that. There is no real program that I know of in this country that would help people invest in their own homes to reduce their energy consumption. We really need that type of program. Canadians need help with getting into things such as solar power. People need some help to make these changes to their homes,

perhaps new windows and better insulation. People need help in getting rid of their old oil furnaces and converting to a greener source of energy. Ordinary families need some help with those kinds of things.

• (1335)

Unfortunately, the eco-energy program does not quite cut it. I have had many calls from people who have tried to get an assessment. They have found that not much of what they are trying to invest in is covered. Heat pumps and other green sources of energy are very expensive, around \$18,000. When people are only getting up to \$1,300 back, it is not much of an incentive to make the change.

Canada could be doing much more and investing in cleaner energy rather than going down the nuclear route.

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member and yet again I am trying to be, shall I say, civil because one assumes that a member of Parliament does his or her research and actually has a sincere effort to tell the truth to the Canadian public. Here is the truth.

I personally have applied to some of the government programs for funding to upgrade furnaces and make my own home greener. Contrary to what the member is telling Canadians, there are in fact a lot of programs that are available to make homes greener and more efficient.

Perhaps the member could do some homework and provide really good answers to her constituents. That might get her constituents onboard with helping the country go green. The fact is if a member is not going to do his or her job, then naturally the member's constituents will not know what to do.

I might also offer the member an idea. She has said there are absolutely no programs in the country; I believe that is exactly what she said, no programs to help the country go green. Let me brag about Tree Canada. I would be happy to table this document. If the member would do her research and do her job for which she is receiving a reasonable salary, she would know that a person can actually calculate his or her carbon footprint and offset the footprint by planting some trees.

If the motives are simply to spread misinformation and scare tactics and all the stuff the NDP members always do, then the member is doing her job correctly.

• (1340)

**Ms. Catherine Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member, and I am sorry I do not know the name of his riding. I am sorry if it seems as though I am chuckling at his intervention.

It is Canadians, my constituents, who are telling me that these programs do not work. I keep bringing the subject up.

**Mr. Gary Goodyear:** They work for me.

**Ms. Catherine Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I am so happy for the member that they work for him. Perhaps one has to be a member of the Conservative Party for these programs to work, I do not know.

*Government Orders*

I receive mail from my constituents telling me that they have applied for these programs.

**Mr. Gary Goodyear:** Table it.

**Ms. Catherine Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I will table that correspondence at my earliest opportunity.

The member talked about a tree program and that is great, but where I come from, all the trees are being cut down. We keep trying to plant trees and let them grow. There is such a contradiction in what the member says.

I have to say that I have many examples of how these programs are not working for ordinary Canadians. The amounts of money are not significant enough to allow them to invest. They have to make ends meet on their ordinary family salaries. They cannot afford to make the changes necessary to green up their own homes and our communities.

I have asked the minister to increase the amounts. Unfortunately, that has not happened.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member has talked a fair bit about the propriety of the \$650 million limit. If I heard her correctly, I believe she suggested that there was some evidence that liability could be in the billions of dollars. I think she also mentioned Paris and Brussels.

I took the opportunity to read the speech by the Minister of Natural Resources and I would like to quote from it:

In the case of the Paris-Brussels regime, the maximum compensation is approximately \$500 million Canadian.... The Vienna Convention sets the minimum liability limit at approximately \$500 million Canadian.

In the speech of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, he provided information with regard to studies that were done on Quebec's Gentilly-2 reactor and Ontario's Darlington plant. The study said that in the worst case scenario, the cost of an accident could range from \$1 million to \$100 million.

What is the basis for her estimates that the liability limit could be inadequate and that the liability could be some billion dollars?

With respect to these other jurisdictions, which the minister indicated had limits to \$500 million, she represented them as having unlimited liability. It would appear to me that either the member has given incorrect information to the House, or the minister or the parliamentary secretary has given incorrect information to the House. I would like to know who is giving the correct information.

**Ms. Catherine Bell:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member actually identified different countries than I identified and that the minister identified. I identified Germany, Japan, Austria and Switzerland as countries that have unlimited liability. It is the U.S. that has liability that could be as high as \$9 billion.

Let us consider the areas where some of our nuclear facilities are located. Some experts have said that nuclear facilities should not be in populated areas where there are families, homes, businesses and schools and that they should be further away from populations to limit the impact. They have also suggested that if we are going to be building new ones, they should be built underground. If there were to be an incident nearby, the human cost, the cost of people's homes, the cost to businesses and future loss of revenue could be quite high.

For a business that generates a couple of million dollars a year or even more, the costs could add up very quickly. If an area were contaminated for a number of years or even forever, then the future costs to those businesses could be quite high.

That is what I am basing my statistics on. That is also what the people whom I quoted are basing their representations on.

• (1345)

**Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's handling of the Chalk River incident shook the confidence of many Canadians with respect to our nuclear industry. Many of my constituents expressed their concerns to me. I think we would all feel more confident if we were to leave it to nuclear scientists and engineers to decide where nuclear safety resides rather than leaving it up to politicians.

Given the firing of the president of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission by the Conservative government, I am wondering, as are my constituents, does Canada still have an independent nuclear safety regulator? How accountable is it now? How transparent are the mechanisms to ensure the safety of the operations of the nuclear industry in Canada?

**Ms. Catherine Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Victoria for that question as I did not get a chance to speak about this in my intervention on Bill C-5.

She is absolutely right when she says that Canadians need to have confidence that the Nuclear Safety Commission can work at arm's length. However, I do not think we have that confidence. We lost that confidence back in January with the Conservative government's firing of Linda Keen, the nuclear safety commissioner at the time, in the dead of night.

Unfortunately, that left Canadians wondering what was going on. How can we have confidence in this industry when things like this happen? That was a very sad day. We know that the commissioner was trying to look after public safety and security and unfortunately she was let go from her job for doing just that.

**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 want to thank all members for such a spirited and fulsome debate on this issue, but because of the debate the issue has been almost exhaustively discussed, I believe. Therefore, I move:

That this question be now put.

• (1350)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the motion has been made to put this question, because we have just started to debate this today after a bit of a lapse. We had a couple of speeches, one from the minister and one from the member leading off the debate, but this is an important bill.

It is an important bill from the standpoint that it is another example of where legislation in Canada has gone without an update for an extended period of time. We have to understand why this happens and whether or not we have left ourselves exposed. In this bill, we go from a civil liability limit of \$75 million up to proposing \$650 million.

*Statements by Members*

We have the same problem in other legislation with which I am involved. Neither the Access to Information Act nor the Privacy Act have been updated in 25 years, yet those pieces of legislation deal with significant matters related to Canadians. They are important to Canadians. Those matters have not been kept up to date with the changes in our world, both the 9/11 mentality and the technological changes.

I suggest to the member that it is important to hear not only from the principal members dealing in natural resources but from parliamentarians with regard to some of the other important issues related to legislation that has not been kept up to date. We need to hold the government accountable.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, while I thank my hon. colleague from Mississauga South, my point remains the same, which is that there has been, I believe, fulsome debate on this issue.

In response to the member's question about how legislation from time to time needs to be updated, that is certainly correct. Because of that, I would underscore the fact that this needs to be dealt with promptly and expeditiously. I would also suggest that all pieces of legislation coming before this House are, I believe, quite exhaustively discussed within respective caucuses.

I believe my hon. colleague from the New Democratic Party said earlier in her presentation that the position of each of the parties is well known. I believe that to be true. I believe that by continuing the debate all we would be doing is restricting the ability of this House to deal with an important piece of legislation in the expeditious manner it deserves.

Therefore, I think my motion that the question be now put is quite appropriate and should be dealt with at this time.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are three reactors in different provinces. In Ontario, there is Ontario Power Generation in Bruce. In New Brunswick, there are the operators at New Brunswick Power. In Quebec, it is Hydro-Québec.

This piece of legislation addresses an important issue. As I indicated in my question for the parliamentary secretary, it is a piece of legislation that has not been updated for a very substantial period of time.

I know there are only a few minutes remaining before question period, but I think it is important for Canadians to understand what we are debating. Bill C-5 is an act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident. It establishes a specific civil liability and a regime with respect to nuclear incidents and repeals the current Nuclear Liability Act, which provides the regime today.

This act, which will repeal the Nuclear Liability Act, is very similar to that act. It does make operators of nuclear installations exclusively liable but, as I indicated, it increases significantly, from \$75 million to \$650 million, the extent of their liability and the financial security they are required to maintain. The establishment of a form of civil liability and a requirement to pay compensation in respect of damage caused by a nuclear incident is in line with the efforts to manage and minimize the risk involved in the use of nuclear material.

The bill establishes a specific liability regime applicable in the case of a nuclear incident and sets out the terms and conditions in respect of the civil liability and the compensation to be paid for any damage caused in such circumstances. It also provides for the establishment of a tribunal to administer the claims arising from the nuclear incident.

I was very interested in this and did a little research. The bill states specifically that it is binding on the federal government and on the provinces and it excludes two types of circumstances. The first exclusion includes incidents resulting from an act of war, hostilities, civil war or insurrection, but not a terrorist activity as defined in the Criminal Code. The second exclusion is damage to a nuclear installation or any property located at the installation and used in connection with it if the operator of the installation is responsible for the damage.

Earlier in the debate, there was some question with regard to the liability exclusion of suppliers of equipment that would be used in these plants. As someone who is not an expert in this area, I am not exactly sure about this and certainly would want to ask this question. In the event that there is a fault with regard to the equipment supplier, the operator itself, the purchaser of that equipment, would have legal recourse. I am not sure how far the umbrella has to go to insure all those who are directly or indirectly the source of the problem and the cause for the liability and the costs and damages to be incurred.

Because of the time constraints, I am not going to be able to deliver all of my speech, but in preparing for this debate today I noted that the minister laid out the main principles of the bill. The responsibility of providing an insurance framework for the nuclear industry falls under federal jurisdiction. That is one of the reasons why we need this. It is a framework that is in existence today. Both the current legislation and Bill C-5 apply to nuclear power plants, nuclear research reactors, fuel fabrication facilities and facilities managing nuclear fuel.

• (1355)

There are three principles involved that the legislation tries to emulate. Those are the principles of absolute and exclusive liability of the operator, mandatory insurance, and limitations in the time and amount. These are the kinds of things that are consistent with legislation internationally.

I understand that we are going to break now. Unfortunately, I will not be able to be in the House to continue my speech due to committee responsibilities, but I appreciate having at least this brief time to address the House on Bill C-5.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### GOVERNMENT POLICIES

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, actions taken by our Conservative government over the past two and a half years have made real improvements to the lives of Canadians. Some are more noticeable than others but all are important.

*Statements by Members*

Canadians see the savings they get from the two per cent reduction in the GST almost every time they purchase something. They also notice the savings we provided in income tax cuts through lower deductions from their paycheques, less tax paid at tax time, or more money being returned to them through tax refunds.

Corporate tax cuts are every bit as important but are less obvious. These cuts encourage businesses to keep operating in Canada or encourage new businesses to come and operate in Canada.

The NDP, the Bloc and even some Liberals criticize these corporate tax cuts, yet these, more than anything else, create the jobs that we need for us, for our children and for our grandchildren. This is something the opposition just does not get but Canadians do, and that is what is important.

\* \* \*

• (1400)

**HOWARD DILL**

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week Canada lost an extraordinary citizen with the passing of Howard Dill of Windsor, Nova Scotia.

Howard was a giant, and not just for the breeding of his Atlantic giant pumpkin. His community spirit, his kind heart, and his immense passion to make a difference made him a true leader.

Howard held the title of the grower of the world's largest pumpkin from 1979 to 1982, and today pumpkins grown from his Dill Atlantic Giant seed win competitions around the world. Howard and his pumpkins have been featured on the Martha Stewart show and inspired the Windsor—West Hants Pumpkin Regatta, where pumpkin paddlers race across Lake Pesaquid every fall.

Howard's passion for and encyclopedic knowledge of hockey helped install Windsor in the history books as the birthplace of hockey.

Howard was an icon who served his community, province and country with distinction. To his loving wife Hilda and their children Danny, Andrew, Maureen and Diana, our thoughts and prayers are with them.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**DANIEL CHALIFOUR**

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to highlight the extraordinary performance of an athlete in my riding, paracyclist Daniel Chalifour.

Mr. Chalifour, who is visually impaired, began his tandem cycling training in the fall of 2005. In April 2006, his road performances earned him a place on the Quebec team at the National Cycling Championships. To everyone's surprise, he and his pilot at the time, Normand Couillard, won two bronze medals.

In 2007, two years after he started training, Daniel Chalifour and his new pilot, Alexandre Cloutier, had spectacular results. They dominated, winning nine gold medals and one silver in ten races. On the world stage, they won three gold medals in track races at the Parapanamerican Games in Cali, Colombia in November 2007.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I would like to congratulate this young athlete who is an example of strength, courage and determination for our youth.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**CHILD CARE**

**Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to salute child care workers in my riding who are doing outstanding work in difficult circumstances with poor pay and no benefits.

While the Prime Minister recently recognized extraordinary teachers like Kim Atkinson of Victoria and others, his government is undermining their work by offering a piecemeal approach to the national child care crisis. In Victoria alone, 13,000 child care spaces are needed. Across the country, waiting lists for day care spaces are years long. Meanwhile the government's inaction is opening the door to big box child care.

How can the government justify the hypocrisy of recognizing the excellence of well trained teachers, yet allow big box operators to enter Canada and specify in their ads that people without training can apply, as one company is doing in Air Canada's May issue of *enRoute* magazine?

What Canada really needs is a national child care system with standards that protect our children and ensure workers have decent working conditions.

\* \* \*

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Aung San Suu Kyi has now been held in detention for more than 12 years. On Tuesday the Burmese authorities once again extended Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest. Canada has repeatedly called on the Burmese regime to release Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners.

Canada has long been at the forefront of support for Burma's democratic movement. In October of last year, this House conferred honorary Canadian citizenship on Aung San Suu Kyi in recognition of her long and courageous struggle to bring freedom and democracy to Burma. Canada condemns the extension of her house arrest and calls for her immediate release.

On another front, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Michel Sleiman on his recent appointment as the President of Lebanon. Our government welcomes President Sleiman's appointment.

On behalf of the Conservative government, I wish the Lebanese people success in their efforts to achieve peace and national unity.

### SAFE DRINKING WATER

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on this second ever National Day of Action the Assembly of First Nations has clearly identified that one of its priorities is to improve the living conditions of its children. This would include water quality.

That is why it is so disturbing to see a report last week by the Polaris Institute, the Assembly of First Nations and the Canada Labour Congress suggesting that water quality in first nations communities across the country has reached a boiling point. This report confirms that concerted efforts to improve first nations drinking water are but a drop in the bucket. According to the report, as of last month about 100 aboriginal communities across the country remain on drinking water advisories. This is appalling. First nations children deserve better.

The Conservative government cannot simply ignore this very real wake up call.

On this, the second National Day of Action we are calling on the government to immediately commit to do more to ensure first nations people across the country and not just their children have safe drinking water.

\* \* \*

• (1405)

### HOUSING

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as much as I would like to talk about the shameful state that the Liberals left first nations water and all the progressive work we have done to correct those issues, I am going to talk about housing today.

We are committed to ensuring that first nations people have the same opportunities as other Canadians and our government knows that housing is a key issue.

The government recently announced the opening of a \$300 million first nations market housing fund that will offer the means for individuals and families living on reserve to build equity and generate wealth through home ownership. It is anticipated that up to 25,000 new homes over 10 years will be provided through this fund.

The Government of Canada also signed a historic memorandum of understanding with British Columbia and the First Nations Leadership Council agreeing to work together to develop a comprehensive approach to improve housing for first nations communities, individuals and families both on and off reserve.

We have made significant progress and will continue to work with first nations to deliver results. This government is getting the job done.

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[Translation]

### NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today is the First Nations National Day of Action. The aim of this day of action is to raise public awareness regarding the important issues facing aboriginal peoples. The Bloc Québécois

### Statements by Members

joins the first nations in calling on the Conservative government to finally take action.

The need for massive investment in aboriginal communities is well known. The Conservative government must work in partnership with first nations to help them protect their children, invest in their future and assume their respective responsibilities.

A number of projects are awaiting the government's response, including the "mission of 10,000 opportunities" proposed by the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, which happens to be demonstrating here today on Parliament Hill.

The Bloc Québécois supports these initiatives and urges the Conservative government to take immediate action.

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[English]

### TAXATION

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader has some explaining to do. He has spent the last two years telling Canadians that he opposes a carbon tax, but now the flip-flopping Liberal leader has changed his mind. He has decided to punish hard-working Canadians by imposing a massive gas tax. He wants Canadians to pay even more to drive their cars and heat their homes. This on top of his threat to increase the GST and to eliminate the \$1,200 per year child care benefit.

We on this side of the House are not the only ones who cannot believe the Liberal leader wants to do this. His own MPs are worried. They know that higher energy prices will hurt middle and low income Canadians, including seniors on a fixed income.

Under this Conservative government over three-quarters of a million jobs have been created. We have kept our promise and reduced the GST from 7% to 5%. The debt has been paid down and income taxes have been reduced.

This Conservative government is providing strong economic leadership and is standing up for Canadian families.

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### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada embarrassed itself on the world stage last year when the Conservative government opposed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Canada was one of only four countries in the world to oppose it when an overwhelming majority of countries, 143, voted in favour. Over 100 legal experts agreed that Canada did not have a legal basis to reject the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The government's opposition to the UN declaration went against the advice of its own officials. The government is hiding behind bogus arguments to defend its betrayal of Canada's aboriginal peoples.

*Statements by Members*

Canada was once a leader on human rights issues. It is an international embarrassment that we would undermine the declaration at the UN. Now Canada is even blocking attempts to implement a similar document at the Organization of American States.

On this National Day of Action we are demanding that the Conservative government reverse its position and stand up for our rights.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE SAINT-JEAN**

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I take great pleasure and pride in announcing, on behalf of the Conservative team in Quebec, that the Royal Military College Saint-Jean officially reopened on May 24.

In just 25 months in power, this government has kept its promise. This is further proof that the people in Montérégie can count on our government to deliver real results.

Once again, we see the powerlessness of the Bloc Québécois. For 12 years, the member who has achieved exactly nothing has been making empty promises about this. In 18 years in Ottawa, the Bloc Québécois in Saint-Jean has always come up empty. Bloc members measure their success by the number of questions they ask, but the record of achievements of the member for Saint-Jean will always be a big zero.

The Liberals could not accomplish anything, and the Bloc never will. Under the Conservatives, Quebec is growing stronger.

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● (1410)

[English]

**NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION**

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, New Democrats are proud to stand in support and solidarity with first nations on today's National Day of Action. The growing poverty and loss of rights in first nations communities is a shame on our country.

First nations are calling on the government to work with them to protect their children and invest in the future.

In East Vancouver, the Urban Native Youth Association has been waiting for far too long for this government to provide funding for a much needed first nations youth centre. This government must stop shirking responsibility and make this important investment as soon as possible.

We call on this government to act on the tragedy of the missing women in the downtown east side and along highway 16. We call on the government to work with first nations for justice and an end to discrimination. We call on the government to adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The NDP will not let up on holding this government to account to ensure equality and justice for the first nations people in Canada.

**NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION**

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for this year's National Day of Action, the Assembly of First Nations is putting a strong, clear focus on the plight of first nations children.

Sadly, children are paying a very high price for this government's failures. First nations children receive less funding for education per capita than many other Canadian children. First nations child welfare systems are underfunded, compared to provincial child welfare systems.

The national chief has put these issues in context, saying there are more first nations children in care today than there were students at the height of the residential school era.

Today's National Day of Action is about getting this minority Conservative government to acknowledge that the status quo is not acceptable. We call on this Conservative government to act immediately to address the real needs of first nations children and their communities. It is the very least that this government can do.

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[Translation]

**CENSORSHIP**

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my Bloc Québécois colleagues and I are very concerned about the reasons for the dismissal of the assistant to the Conservative member for Cambridge. We are also concerned by the fact that Ms. Van Eyk provided an explanation not to justify the purchase of tickets for her personal use but to protect her boss's reputation. Talk about déjà vu.

The MP's assistant was actually fired for reserving tickets to attend the screening of a movie that the Conservatives do not seem to like because it is considered to be risqué. They believe that it is contrary to the public good. This incident confirms our fears regarding the thinly veiled censorship in Bill C-10.

The Bloc Québécois considers Ms. Van Eyk's firing as a confirmation of its members' fears regarding the Conservative government's desire for censorship in order to impose its bigoted moral view. Tartuffe, Molière's religious hypocrite, said, "Cover up that bosom, which I can't endure to look on."

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[English]

**NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION**

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today's national day of protest is no surprise. It is a direct result of the actions, and inactions, of that Conservative government.

The action was to break its promise to put the wheels on Kelowna. The inaction was to do nothing to replace the accord that it killed.

The absence of the Kelowna accord has left aboriginal people with few alternatives to address the issues of health, education and infrastructure in their communities.

In fact, conditions have worsened since last year's day of national protest; a shameful condemnation of the Conservative government. The Conservatives did not get the message. Aboriginal people in this country are frustrated; frustrated about needs unmet and frustrated about Conservative promises broken.

The minister has chucked aside their voices, chucked aside their hopes, and chucked aside their dreams of a better life. One would say that the minister has done sweet chuck-all.

The Conservative government promised to do more. Aboriginal people deserve better.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

#### LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGN FINANCING

**Mr. Mervin Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are wondering if Elections Canada will give special treatment to the Liberal Party by extending their deadline for paying back their leadership race loans.

Millions of dollars in loans were given to the Liberal leader and other Liberal candidates by rich, powerful elites for the campaigns during the Liberal leadership race over a year ago.

The Canada Elections Act states that candidates who receive loans during a leadership race must pay the loan back within 18 months. If the loan is not paid back by that deadline, it constitutes an illegal donation.

Today marks five days until June 3, the 18-month deadline. The former Liberal leadership candidates now have less than a week to pay back all their loans.

Elections Canada will have to decide very soon if it will give the Liberal Party special treatment by extending their repayment deadline.

Two questions: Will the Liberal leadership contestants break the law by ignoring the loan payback deadline, or will Elections Canada give special treatment to the Liberal Party and its leader?

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for at least five weeks, classified documents about our forces in Afghanistan and our allies at NATO lay open in a private house. The government has failed to explain how such a security breach was allowed to happen and then go undetected for five weeks at least. Its explanations are impossible to believe.

The government is either incompetent or it is covering up the truth. Which is it?

### Oral Questions

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, such a security breach was not allowed. It was not permitted. That is why the minister of foreign affairs, when he took responsibility for the breach that occurred, tendered his resignation. That is why the Prime Minister accepted it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is not just about the minister, or the former minister.

At noon on Monday, standing next to the President of Ukraine, the Prime Minister claimed that the Couillard affair was not a security issue. However, the night before, on Sunday, the misplaced documents had been returned. The Prime Minister's Office should have been aware of that on Sunday evening.

When the Prime Minister denied the sad reality on Monday, was he being incompetent or was he hiding the truth from Canadians?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Again, Mr. Speaker, we have said quite clearly what took place. The Prime Minister became aware of the fact that the documents had been placed in an unsecured area and had been left in that unsecured place on Monday afternoon. At that time, action was taken immediately. The minister of foreign affairs tendered his resignation and that resignation was accepted by the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again, telling the House that a gross security breach was discovered on a Sunday night and there was no action until five o'clock the next day is just not credible.

The government is either guilty of incompetence or a cover-up. There is no other alternative. The confidence of Canadians in our security procedures has been damaged. We need some honest answers in order to rebuild their confidence.

How can the government possibly fail to create an open, public inquiry to get to the bottom of this mess?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have stated many times in the House, and it is not going to be news to anybody now, that the Department of Foreign Affairs is conducting a review of the matter. It will examine what has taken place with the documents and whether there were any security issues related to that.

Obviously it was a breach of the rules. The rules are important and that is why the minister paid for that with his resignation.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, federal officials retrieved the documents from Madame Couillard's house on Sunday afternoon. Yesterday the ex-foreign affairs minister issued a statement that said:

I informed the prime minister of my resignation...as soon as I became aware of a security breach...

Yet, the government House leader insists the Prime Minister only found out for the first time on Monday at 5 p.m.

*Oral Questions*

How can anyone believe that the all-controlling Prime Minister was not briefed about something this explosive between Sunday afternoon when they got the documents and Monday at 5 p.m.?

• (1420)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the sequence of events is quite clear. The Prime Minister became aware of the documents having been left in an unsecured area on Monday afternoon. Action was taken immediately. The foreign affairs minister tendered his resignation and the resignation was accepted.

[Translation]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government's version of this story is as full of holes as Swiss cheese.

The secret documents left behind at Ms. Couillard's home were returned on Sunday, 24 hours before the Prime Minister says he became aware of the situation. These documents went missing some five weeks earlier, but no one mentioned that to the Prime Minister.

Will he stop taking us—and the Canadian public—for a bunch of fools?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, not at all. The facts are quite clear. The Prime Minister became aware of the problem with the documents left in an unsecured place. That was a clear violation of the rules. He became aware of that on Monday afternoon, and action was taken immediately.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there is a very strict procedure for handling secret government documents. First, such documents are numbered and kept in safes at the government department and at the minister's home, when the minister takes such documents home. What is more, such documents are transported in a locked briefcase. The department ensures that the documents are returned to the safe daily.

Is that the procedure the Department of Foreign Affairs follows for all departmental documents?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I believe the leader of the Bloc Québécois is somewhat confused about the difference between departmental documents and cabinet documents.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am not confused at all, but there are those who are trying to confuse matters. He is the champion at it.

I think the rules were indeed followed and that it was known early on that the documents were missing. The minister may not have noticed—he does not notice much anyway—but one thing is certain,

the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Privy Council and the Prime Minister, who controls everything, knew.

Are they not hiding the truth and did they not know from the start that the documents were missing? It does not make sense that it took five weeks to notice this, because that is not how things work in a modern state. It is impossible.

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, he is quite agitated, but what happened is what happened. As soon as the Prime Minister learned of the breach, as soon as the foreign affairs minister made him aware of that on Monday afternoon, action was taken.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, according to the government, it only learned about the disappearance of the documents lost by the former foreign affairs minister when they reappeared on Sunday, at the same time that Julie Couillard was recording her interview. Once again according to the government, the minister did not know they were missing for five weeks. Given the strict rules about such documents, that does not seem plausible.

Will the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons admit that the government's version is nothing but a big cover up for party purposes?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, not at all.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said yesterday that security regulations were to be strictly followed. It is completely impossible that the Prime Minister did not know the documents had disappeared and that he had not questioned the former foreign affairs minister on the subject.

If the Prime Minister knew, why did he hide the truth, if not to cover up his own government's incompetence?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there was a serious breach of the rules. That is why the foreign affairs minister tendered his resignation. That is why that resignation was accepted by the Prime Minister on Monday. It is an unfortunate turn of events, but that is, indeed, what took place.

With regard to any lingering questions there may be, those are all being examined by the Department of Foreign Affairs in its review. I am quite satisfied that it is capable of doing that. If it feels the need to draw on resources of other agencies of government, it can do so.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the former foreign affairs minister had a bad habit of leaving confidential documents all over the place. Our defence critic even saw this happen on a commercial flight to Europe.

*Oral Questions*

The member for Beauce was a minister for 286 days. That is a lot of confidential reports, cabinet documents and top secret memos.

My question is simple. Are all the documents—not just those from the Department of Foreign Affairs, but all the documents—that were in the possession of the member for Beauce accounted for? Was a comprehensive investigation carried out to ensure that no other secret documents are missing?

• (1425)

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated many times by now, the Department of Foreign Affairs is conducting a review of this, which should be able to determine if there are any other issues outstanding. However, we do know that the documents in question were in fact returned by Madame Couillard to the government.

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**AFGHANISTAN**

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister read and physically tore pages from a briefing book, a secret briefing book, on a commercial flight in full view. It is not just his department that is involved, it is all cabinet documents. The RCMP must investigate for any other security breaches.

He may be gone, but the gaffs and diplomatic faux pas keep on coming. The Prime Minister's Office was just forced into a diplomatic backtrack after stating that the Italian prime minister had decided to lift combat restrictions on Italy's forces in Afghanistan. The problem is it just is not true.

Are they so isolated in Afghanistan that the Conservatives have to invent allies for their misguided war?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have 46 allies for this very important mission in Afghanistan. For some time, one of the things that we have been encouraging some of our allies to do, allies who have restrictions on their troops, is to lift those restrictions wherever possible.

We think that would be a good thing to assist in our cause in Afghanistan, one that has been endorsed once again by Parliament, notwithstanding that the party over there did not want it happen. I understand that members of that party do not want to see our troops free to do their jobs there, but we want to see them there. We want their allies helping them as much as possible. We are glad that the Italian government is looking into that possibility with regard to the Italian forces.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in sequence, the government's claims in the matter of the ex-minister were: one, we do not meddle in the personal lives of the ministers; two, this is a national security issue so we cannot talk about it; three, now that we look ridiculous, we do damage control.

With so many danger signals surrounding the foreign minister's involvement with Madam Couillard, it would be irresponsible for any government to not involve security agencies to review the matter. If I might say so, the departmental inquiry into this matter is absolutely not adequate to get the answers. To end the cover-up we need, nay, we demand, a public inquiry—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. government House leader.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the hon. member is neiging over there, I have indicated several times to the House, and I think the hon. member was paying attention, that we have asked the Department of Foreign Affairs to conduct a review of this matter. It will do so.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the ex-minister first told everyone in Canada that he became aware on Sunday afternoon of the breach and then advised the Prime Minister on Monday. In the second statement, he says that he actually became aware on Sunday and that as soon as he became aware, he actually advised the Prime Minister. Which is it?

The fact is, according to the now ex-minister, the Prime Minister ought to have known—and not just ought to but must have known—by Sunday night that there was a breach. What was he doing on Monday afternoon that he did not want to take seriously any of these serious questions?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked which it was. It is exactly as I said. As the Prime Minister has said, he became aware of it on Sunday afternoon and that is when action was taken.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Bourassa.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Obviously the government House leader's answer is very popular, but we must have some order.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Bourassa. Order, please.

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since the Couillard affair began, the Prime Minister and his House leader have been dodging our questions for the past three weeks. Every time, they claimed that it was a question of privacy. But yesterday, we asked the Minister of Public Safety if there had been any meetings between May 1 and May 8, 2008, between our intelligence agency and the Prime Minister's Office regarding the Couillard affair and his minister. He did not want to answer because he said it was a question of national security. However, yesterday, a few hours later, outside the House, one of his staff denied that such a meeting took place.

*Oral Questions*

First it was privacy, then it was national security and now, it is anyone's guess. Was there a meeting, yes or no, and why did he not want to answer?

• (1430)

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I apologize. Obviously, as I have been getting on my feet so often, fatigue is setting in. I should make clear to the House that the Prime Minister, as he said and as I have said repeatedly, became aware of this issue on Monday afternoon, and that is when action was taken.

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I hope the Minister of Public Safety is not tired and that he will answer the question.

We have now learned that it was not just five weeks that Ms. Couillard had the documents, but seven weeks, that is, after her favourite minister returned from the meeting in Bucharest.

The Prime Minister always maintained that there was never a problem during that time. Either he is incompetent or he is covering up the facts or—perhaps—he had classified information from his office informing him of the situation concerning these documents. What is the answer?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not just getting fatigued, I am getting bored, because we keep getting the same type of question again and again.

What took place is very simple and very clear. There was a problem with documents left in an unsecured place. The Prime Minister became—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. We have to be able to hear the response of the government House leader. It is almost impossible for the Chair to hear a word that is being said. The government House leader has the floor.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** As I said, Mr. Speaker, the documents were left in an unsecured place. That was a clear breach of the rules. The Prime Minister became aware of that Monday afternoon. Coming at that time was the resignation of the minister of foreign affairs, which was acted on very quickly.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, according to the media, the former minister of foreign affairs, the member for Beauce, asked that Julie Couillard be listed as a “designated traveller” as the minister's spouse.

Does that mean that Ms. Couillard was issued a green special passport or a red diplomatic passport as the minister's spouse?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again we are veering off into the realm of personal relationships. That is not the issue in question. The issue that led to the resignation of the foreign affairs minister was the problem of leaving documents in an unsecured place.

This was not a question of the relationships anyone had with anyone else. We are not going to inquire into people's personal relationships. It has not been our practice in the past. I thought it was not the practice of the opposition parties. Perhaps they have changed their policies. We do not intend to change ours.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this is amazing. Now, a diplomatic passport is a matter of privacy. What he is saying makes no sense. It is not a matter of privacy; it is a matter of public security.

I hope that an exhaustive check is required for a red diplomatic passport. Is this not further proof that this government is trying to hide the truth from us by claiming that these are privacy issues?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the Bloc Québécois passionately defending Canadian passports today.

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this morning Canada proudly announced that Italy would modify its rules of engagement in Afghanistan. But this information was false. The Prime Minister's inner circle had to scramble to rectify matters because the information had already hit newsrooms throughout North America.

Do the Conservatives really want to show the world that their foreign affairs policy is characterized by amateurism and incompetence?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Italian prime minister is considering lifting restrictions on Italian soldiers deployed in Afghanistan.

Thanks to open dialogue and cooperation, the Prime Minister was able to encourage our allies to re-examine their commitment to the Afghan mission. The former Liberal government never engaged in this kind of cooperation.

• (1435)

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' foreign affairs policy is simple: broadcast information from their international counterparts that was shared in confidence and broadcast their incompetence—the Brodie affair, the blunder with the governor of Kandahar and then this morning's gaffe. Incompetence is obviously not limited to the member for Beauce.

Is the incompetence of the Prime Minister himself not the problem?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Not at all, Mr. Speaker. We are proud that the Prime Minister is promoting Canadian values and the Afghan mission with our allies. We have every intention of continuing to encourage our allies to lift restrictions imposed on the troops.

[English]

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's public babbling over the removal of the Italian government's caveats on the mission of its troops in Afghanistan has now made it infinitely more difficult to get those caveats removed.

The government was so desperate to find a distraction to the embarrassing resignation that it was willing to jeopardize years of careful international diplomacy. Where have we seen this before? Is this not the same as the former minister of foreign affairs musing about the removal of the governor of Kandahar?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, this government has been taking a leadership role in trying to encourage our allies to lift restrictions, to work together with our allies in Afghanistan and to appreciate their efforts.

We are not like other parties that have been calling for the mission to end and have been saying to abandon our allies. Instead, we have been taking leadership, stepping up, showing our allies how to do it, taking leadership by example and encouraging them to follow that example. Everyone in this House should be encouraging our allies to follow that example as well.

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, embarrassing international headlines followed the Prime Minister to Italy yesterday, where the news of this "scandalo" greeted the Prime Minister on the front pages.

The *La Stampa* headline was "*I piani Nato nell'alcova dell'amante*": NATO plans in the lover's room. On the front page of *Corriere della Sera*, it was "*il ministro innamorato perde la testa (e i documenti)*": lovestruck minister loses his head and his documents.

When the Prime Minister launched his European tour, are these really the headlines he was hoping for?

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. government House leader.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know some on that side of the House enjoying reading certain kinds of newspapers.

On this side of the House, we are proud of the message the Prime Minister is delivering in Europe. He is travelling the continent speaking to other G-8 leaders about the importance of taking action on the environment, action on greenhouse gases and promoting the plan we have put in place, the turning the corner plan to reduce greenhouse gases by 2020. Most importantly, he is encouraging them to join with us in getting the large emitters like China, the

United States and Russia to also make commitments to reduce greenhouse gases.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. I would urge hon. members to calm down. We have to be able to hear the questions and the answers.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso now has the floor.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today the Prime Minister is in London and Canada is all over the headlines there too.

The *Times* headline states: "—Foreign Minister...steps down after ex-lover reveals security lapse". The *Daily Mail* states: "I quit, says minister who fell for Hell's Angel girl". The *Evening Standard* says: "Minister resigns after leaving files with 'biker chick'".

Is this the reputation the Prime Minister had in mind when he said he wanted to put Canada back on the world stage?

• (1440)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was just a couple of days ago that I heard the deputy leader of the Liberal Party saying he was not interested in these kinds of questions about personal lives, but it seems that he does not have too many followers in that caucus today.

In fact, I will go back to a previous prime minister, Jean Chrétien, who said this on privacy when he was talking about how he put together his first cabinet:

As for their marriages, sexual orientation, or other private matters that had no bearing on their ability to serve the public well, I didn't think these were any of my business.

Apparently the Liberal Party has changed its policy since Mr. Chrétien was prime minister.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is ridiculous. This affair has been bungled by the wilful blindness of a Prime Minister who wants to throw Canada's international reputation under the bus to protect his protegee.

The government is afraid to investigate this incident because it knows what the outcome is going to be.

As for what the House leader says about the diplomatic passport, a diplomatic passport is the property of the Government of Canada, so this issue is pertinent. Have you guys checked that out yet and will you get that passport back to the—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. I remind the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso that he should address all his questions to the Chair.

The hon. government House leader has the floor.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member started by asking about Canada's reputation on the world stage. Our reputation is strong. We are leading in Afghanistan. We are leading with our NATO allies. We are respected for that.

*Oral Questions*

We are the second-largest contributor in the world to the peacekeeping mission in Darfur, where we are very concerned about what is taking place. We are the second-largest donor to the World Food Programme and are doing what we can to help the world's poor, particularly at a time of turmoil like we have seen.

We have been doing other things around the world in taking the lead in Haiti with the United Nations mission and record aid, for example, and taking the lead with serious funding for the Middle East peace process.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition, and particularly the Liberals, always claim that they have done a lot for aboriginals. They always trumpet the Kelowna accord as if it were some—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul has the floor. We will have some order.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Mr. Speaker, when coming to office, our government inherited some very troubling matters that required immediate action.

Could the Minister of Indian Affairs tell this House what progress the government has made on important issues, such as land claims and human rights for aboriginals?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that on the National Day of Action the members of the official opposition cannot even bother to ask a question about aboriginal issues, but why should we be surprised? Under the Liberals, there was no action on specific claims. Under this government, we have specific claims legislation. Under the Liberals, first nations living on reserve had no coverage under the Canadian Human Rights Act. Under the Conservatives, we passed legislation to cover them. Under the Liberals, there was no action plan to clean up dirty water. We have already cut in half the number of reserves facing that situation.

We have action all right, but it is on this side of the House, not over there.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, following the *L'Acadien II* tragedy, Coast Guard and National Defence representatives appeared this morning before the Standing Committee on Official Languages. What we heard was unacceptable. The mother of a sealer who disappeared contacted National Defence for information on the search. During the conversation, she had to switch from French to English to make herself understood.

What will the government do to make sure that this kind of thing does not happen again?

[English]

**Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me inform the member that the search and rescue centres field about 950,000 calls every year. They respond to about 3,000 of them. Each and every one of them is responded to in the language of choice.

Do the people always get the answer they want when they ask a question? No, because not always can it be given. However, we have not had any complaints about the fact they did not get it in the language they wanted to receive it.

●(1445)

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have to change from French to English to get the answer.

[Translation]

In his report, the Commissioner of Official Languages blasted the obstacles facing communities: the Conservative government's inaction and lack of leadership. He made seven recommendations to correct the Conservatives' deliberate blunders.

Will the minister stop running and hiding from the cameras, accept her responsibilities and say whether she plans to act on the recommendations as quickly as possible? Yes or no? She has to stop running away.

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I plan to run to the House every time there is a vote. Everyone knows that a vote was held here this morning. I will be running to exercise my right to vote, unlike what the opposition has been doing for several months now.

That being said, we received the Commissioner of Official Languages' report and we thank him for it. We are now studying the recommendations closely.

\* \* \*

[English]

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today's second National Day of Action is yet another blemish on Canada's international reputation. Our reputation was already tarnished when Canada voted against the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples last year.

Canada is now blocking a similar instrument at the Organization of American States.

When will this government listen to the concerns of aboriginal peoples, give up its artificial legal and constitutional excuses and honour the declaration?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to human rights for first nations, for the first time in 30 years there is one government, and it is the Conservative government, that has been dealing with that.

This House has passed at report stage and third reading the amendments and all that is necessary to include first nations for the first time under the Canadian Human Rights Act. They waited a long time, and they would still be waiting if that member were—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Churchill.

**Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government talks about human rights for first nations and yet first nations children residing on reserve do not receive health care services.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Churchill has the floor.

**Ms. Tina Keeper:** Mr. Speaker, there are no human rights for first nations children residing on reserve. They do not receive health care services.

Last year this House unanimously voted for Jordan's principle to ensure first nations children would receive the same health care services as other Canadian children receive. Jordan's principle is supposed to be implemented nationally, but the Conservative government is only working with one community. Why?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course I was delighted, as I think were all people in this House, about approving Jordan's principle. I salute the people from Norway House who brought forward that issue. When I spoke to the Assembly of First Nations, I told them how our government was pleased to support that.

I am working closely with the Minister of Health and first nations organizations, because no child deserves to be left behind. That is why this government has supported Jordan's principle. It is why we are making sure that we have the proper authorities in place to make sure that no child is left behind.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for over two years, property in Caledonia has been occupied by aboriginals protesting against development on land which they claim is their own. The government, including the member for Haldimand—Norfolk, presumably hopes that the problem will be solved without leadership from Canada's government. That explains the Conservatives' total silence and inaction.

Today is National Day of Action. What action is the government going to take to help the citizens of Caledonia and Six Nations, two years later, to return to their normal lives?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me start by summarizing the action of the Liberal Party of Canada on Caledonia. I am finished now, but let me just continue with what we have done.

We have tabled an offer on the Welland Canal, for example. If the hon. member would look at today's press release from his local newspaper, he would find that first nations and our negotiator are working closely together. They have expressed an awful lot of support for the progress that we have been making. They say, and I agree, that negotiation is the way to go forward. However, there was never even an offer from that party over there because the Liberals ignored them for over 100 years.

● (1450)

**Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, most school-children take for granted having decent elementary and high schools. For many first nations, this is not the case.

The minister pretends education is a priority, but he has not delivered. The government cancelled the \$1.8 billion for education in the Kelowna accord, slashed capital funding, and has definitely delayed the repair and construction of schools, including schools in my riding.

The National Day of Action is sending a message that what is needed is bricks and mortars for schools. When is the government going to deliver?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to summarize, if I could, the number of tripartite agreements between first nations, provinces and the federal government that were negotiated under the federal Liberals during their time in office. I am finished. There was zero, none, not a one, because they never actually did anything about it.

That is why we signed the first ever tripartite agreement with British Columbia. We passed legislation. We are moving ahead with them. I met with the leadership council just last week. I signed an MOU just a month ago with New Brunswick. Why? It is not enough to talk about it; we actually have to have a deal. We have a deal with New Brunswick, and we are working right across the country.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a lack of vision, coherence and leadership by this government have been identified in the annual report on official languages tabled today by Commissioner Graham Fraser. Bilingualism of Supreme Court judges, the court challenges program, the lack of an action plan are but a few examples provided.

When will the minister responsible for official languages begin to concern herself with francophone communities, which are more than ever threatened, and when will the Prime Minister show the leadership that has been lacking?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as promised in the throne speech and reiterated in the 2008 budget, the government will table the second phase of the action plan very soon, in the spring, as we said.

Allow me to set the record straight for the Bloc. It only has crocodile tears for language communities. The member for Joliette said and I quote: "In actual fact, of course, we know that there is really—"

**The Speaker:** The time has expired.

The hon. member for Gatineau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Commissioner Fraser points out that the action plan for official languages, which expired on March 31—two months or 59 days ago—has not yet been renewed.

What is the minister waiting for to renew the action plan without further delay given that the current limbo is increasingly worrisome for the francophone and Acadian communities? The Conservatives are more concerned with helping their oil friends than communities.

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are not at all behind schedule. We announced our intentions in the fall. We repeated them in the spring. One thing is certain, even though the Bloc may be here for another 20 years, it will never produce anything for the minority language communities of this country.

\* \* \*

[English]

**HEALTH**

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of Health disgraced Canadians by refusing to respect the decision of the B.C. Supreme Court to allow Insite to continue its current operation. The minister continues to cite non-scientifically based opinion pieces published by American ideologues as a basis for his position. He claims Canada is breaching international treaties, but the UN disagrees.

How can the minister ignore scientific evidence, the will of the courts and all Canadians affected by substance abuse and addiction?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said during committee, the science is mixed but the public policy is clear. We on this side of the House believe in treatment. We believe in prevention. We believe in enforcement. We believe that we have to get people off the drugs and make sure our young people do not get on the drugs.

In fact, the International Narcotics Control Board that the member spoke about agrees with us that these kinds of programs are not helpful. That is what the United Nations thinks. Since when is he disagreeing with the United Nations?

• (1455)

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, speaking of Insite, let us get some true insight.

Like all Canadians, aboriginals need clear action with real results. When this party came to office, it became very clear that there were very many difficult issues to deal with that were left unaddressed by the previous Liberal government. I said left unaddressed.

The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has outlined what we have done on specific claims and for human rights. Can the minister please provide an update to the House on the concrete action he has taken on other issues of importance to aboriginals?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are many difficult and important issues to deal with in aboriginal affairs and almost every one of them has been made more difficult because there were 13 years of inaction from the former Liberal government.

That is why we are working closely with first nations on an action plan for clean water, tripartite agreements on education and child and family services, a market housing initiative, specific claims legislation, a respectful and meaningful apology for residential schools, and finally, legislation which, for the first time ever, will include first nations under the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Of course, aboriginal people deserve action and they will get that from the Conservative Party, dedicated action, not a press releasing opposition.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is the government's inaction that is forcing first nations families to make heartbreaking decisions on whether to reuse feeding tubes and syringes and risk infection or be safe but watch their children go hungry waiting for these tubes to arrive.

The health minister said he would make sure that no child had to wait for medical care while Ottawa and the provinces argued over the bill, but the Trout family in Cross Lake cannot wait any longer.

As thousands of people march today across Canada on this National Day of Action, when can we expect the government to actually put first nations children first so that they enjoy the same benefits as other Canadian children?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we believe in a child first policy. We have to make sure that children on reserve get the health services they need. If the hon. member has a particular case where that is not taking place, then of course we will take a look at it. However, we also call upon the provinces and territories to work with us to sort out these things before they reach a crisis level. That is their obligation and we would be happy to work with them.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this morning the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development told 13-year-old children from Attawapiskat that building a school for them was not a priority because he simply did not have the money. The children have gone out to the national media and said that they do not believe him.

I would like to ask the minister a simple question. Would he tell the Canadian public the truth, that unlike his predecessors who built schools, he has taken the money from the education budgets for allocations for developing schools and spent the money elsewhere? Would he be at least honest with the Canadian public and tell them that the children of Attawapiskat, like so many other aboriginal children, simply are not a priority for him?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course I will not say that. I find that particular member has a certain way of expressing himself.

I met with the students and they were very respectful. They plead a strong case for a new school, and I understand that, but we prioritize our spending based on health and safety factors. In the entire country, we rate priorities for schools based on health and safety.

I set up a working group with the chiefs and council and other community members in Attawapiskat and meetings have taken place. More meetings will be taking place within a couple of weeks. We are working toward solutions.

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#### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Paul Zed (Saint John, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the Liberal urban caucus releases a report about partnerships and the future of Canada's cities and communities, mayors and councillors are in Quebec City protesting the outrageous neglect of the Conservative infrastructure deficit. Not one penny of its failing Canada fund has been delivered yet. Not one, but two consecutive construction seasons have passed with no new money.

When will the government stop insulting Canada's mayors and when will it start the real work of building our cities and towns?

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I did have a chance to look at the Liberal urban caucus discussion paper and it actually was kind of interesting. It talked about foundations for a nation toward a richer, greener, and fairer Canada.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

• (1500)

**The Speaker:** Order, please. We need to allow the parliamentary secretary to answer the question.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Mr. Speaker, the news is that this Conservative government is already doing what the member is proposing.

I know you sit down during votes and you do not listen, but pay attention. This Conservative government is already delivering \$33 billion, the most ever, to modernize the infrastructure in this country. We are delivering the goods where you failed.

#### *Business of the House*

**The Speaker:** I would urge the honourable parliamentary secretary again to address his remarks to the Chair. If everybody starts talking like that, the disorder will get worse.

The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

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#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister is showcasing Canada's environmental leadership on the world stage this week, the Liberals and the NDP are squabbling among themselves about their so-called plan on the environment, with the Liberal Party's declaration of war on the Canadian taxpayer with a regressive carbon tax.

This week, a certain Liberal from Ontario by the name of Mr. D. McGuinty also said that a carbon tax was not the way to go.

However, from diversity to biofuels, our government is getting it done.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources update this House on some of the accomplishments our government has achieved on the environment?

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the environment, the opposition parties do not have a clue. The NDP talks about a carbon tax and yet our government has already moved to allow the markets to do just that.

Then there are the Liberals. We should keep in mind the comments of the hon. member for Markham—Unionville who admitted that a job-crushing carbon tax on Canadian taxpayers would be highly likely to hurt our living standards.

While the Liberals and the NDP continue to bicker, our government is cutting greenhouse gases by an absolute 20% by 2020, without hurting the Canadian taxpayer. That is called responsible leadership.

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#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would be interested in the government's agenda for tomorrow and next week. In the course of the House leader's answer, I wonder if he could indicate when he intends to designate the last of the opposition days that would apply to this particular supply period.

*Speaker's Ruling*

Second, on this special Day of Action with respect to first nations and aboriginal people, I would like to ask the government House leader what his plans are for the special day of apology with respect to the victims of Indian residential schools. That day is scheduled, as I understand it, for June 11. I wonder if the government House leader could indicate the state of his planning for that particular day. Will the opposition parties be consulted with respect to this matter? Will we be making, for example, special arrangements to bring national chief, Phil Fontaine, and other appropriate aboriginal leaders and elders onto the floor of the House of Commons so they might receive that apology in person? Will all party leaders have an opportunity to speak briefly following the Prime Minister to ensure that the apology is truly comprehensive on behalf of all Canadians? Will the Chief Justice, the Senate and the Governor General be involved because of the important relationship between aboriginal people and the Crown?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Parliament has been having a very successful week. We started with a successful address to Parliament by the President of Ukraine, Victor Yushchenko. The president gave an eloquent speech that was well received by all parliamentarians and Canadians.

This week the House of Commons has been proceeding on the theme of sound economic management without a carbon tax. We passed Bill C-21 to give aboriginals living on reserves the protection of the Canadian Human Rights Act. We passed our biofuels bill, Bill C-33, at third reading and it is now in the Senate. This bill requires that by 2010, 5% of gasoline and by 2012, 2% of diesel and home heating oil be comprised of renewable fuels.

[Translation]

Our bill to implement the Free Trade Agreement with the countries of the European Free Trade Association—the first free trade agreement signed in six years—passed at second reading and was sent to committee.

Bill C-5, which deals with nuclear liability issues, also appears poised to pass at third reading and be sent to the Senate today.

Last night, the Minister of Finance appeared for over four hours to answer questions by parliamentarians on the main estimates of his department.

● (1505)

[English]

Yesterday, the finance committee reported the budget bill back to the House. This bill would ensure a balanced budget, control spending and keep taxes down while avoiding a carbon tax and a heating tax on Canadian families. As well, it would make much needed changes to the immigration system, which will help keep our economy competitive. We will begin debate on that important bill, the budget implementation bill, at report stage tomorrow.

Next week we will be on the same theme, focused on the economy week. Through the budget implementation bill, we are investing in the priorities of Canadians, which include \$500 million to help improve public transit, \$400 million to help recruit front line police officers, nearly \$250 million for carbon capture and storage projects in Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, and \$110 million to help Canadians facing mental health and homelessness challenges.

Those investments, however, could be threatened if the bill does not pass this session due to opposition obstruction and delay. Today we again saw evidence of such procedural delay tactics from the opposition in the form of a concurrence motion. All opposition parties joined together again to ensure that important legislation to strengthen key Canadian economic sectors could not be debated in the House earlier today.

I want to state clearly that this government is absolutely committed to ensuring the passage of the budget implementation bill this session.

[Translation]

In addition to debating it tomorrow at report stage, we will debate the bill next Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, if necessary.

We will also debate: Bill C-7 to modernize our aeronautics sector, Bill C-43 to modernize our customs rules, Bill C-39 to modernize the Canada Grain Act for farmers, Bill C-46 to give farmers more choice in marketing grain, Bill C-14 which allows enterprises choice for communicating with customers, and Bill C-32 to modernize our fisheries sector.

[English]

With regard to the question of the remaining opposition day, as the House knows, we have had all but one of those opposition days already during this portion of the supply cycle. The last opposition day will be scheduled sometime between now and the end of this supply cycle. We do know that we are scheduled to rise on June 20.

With regard to the very helpful suggestions of my friend with regard to the apology to our first nations communities for the residential schools issue, plans are underway for that. I am happy to ask the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to take the very helpful suggestions into account and, if necessary, we would be happy to take up the matter at our usual House leader's meeting.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## PRIVILEGE

### CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION — SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt and the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina on May 15, 2008, concerning the Department of Citizenship and Immigration's newspaper advertisements entitled "Reducing Canada's Immigration Backlog".

I would like to thank the hon. members for having raised this matter, as well as the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons for his intervention.

*Speaker's Ruling*

[English]

In his remarks, the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt brought to the attention of the House that advertisements had been placed in newspapers by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration regarding proposed changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. He contended that the advertisements promoted certain changes to the act as contained in section 6 of Bill C-50, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 26, 2008 and to enact provisions to preserve the fiscal plan set out in that budget.

As hon. members know, Bill C-50 has not yet been adopted by this House or by Parliament. The hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt argued that these advertisements and the use of public funds to pay for them demonstrated contempt for this House on the part of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

In her submission, the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina also contended that these advertisements constituted a contempt of Parliament by presenting misleading information that has obstructed and prejudiced the proceedings of this House. The hon. member likened this situation to a case in 1989 when the government of the day placed an advertisement in newspapers to announce changes to the federal sales tax, which had not been adopted yet by Parliament.

In support of the contention that the use of public funds for these ads constituted a contempt of Parliament, the hon. member cited an October 17, 1980 ruling by Madam Speaker Sauvé regarding an advertising campaign on the government's constitutional position.

[Translation]

The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons argued, for his part, that the question of privilege was not raised at the earliest available opportunity since the advertisements in question had first appeared in newspapers on April 15. To support this point, he quoted passages from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on pages 122 and 124 which state that the Speaker must be satisfied that a question of privilege was raised at the earliest opportunity.

• (1510)

[English]

In addressing the issue of the use of public money, the government House leader stated that the funds used were not dependent on the passage of Bill C-50 but, in fact, had been approved in March of this year as part of interim supply.

In addition, he maintained that the advertisements were written in such a way as to take into account what he described as the core principle of Mr. Speaker Fraser's 1989 ruling, that is:

...that advertising undertaken by the government should not presume or suggest that a decision had been made already when it had not been taken by the House of Commons or by Parliament.

He stressed that words and the tone used in the advertisements fully respected the jurisdiction and privileges of Parliament since they did not presume that Parliament had already taken a decision on the matter. To that end, he quoted from the advertisements in question.

In assessing the merits of any question of privilege raised in the House, the Chair is always mindful of the important point raised by the government House leader regarding timing. It is true that members wishing to raise a question of privilege must do so at the earliest opportunity.

However, there is an important nuance the government House leader may have overlooked. In this case, as in others, it is not so much that the event or issue complained of took place at a given time, but rather that the members bringing the matter to the attention of the House did so as soon as practicable after they became aware of the situation.

The Chair has always exercised discretion on this point given the need to balance the need for timeliness with the important responsibility members have of marshalling facts and arguments before raising matters of such import in the House.

[Translation]

In the case at hand, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration was asked about the advertisements when she appeared before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on the afternoon of Tuesday, May 13, less than two days before the matter was raised in the House. Given these circumstances, I am satisfied that the members for Scarborough—Agincourt and Trinity—Spadina have respected the timing requirements of our established procedure for raising questions of privilege.

[English]

The Chair must now determine whether or not the placement of the advertisements related to certain provisions of Bill C-50 has interfered with the ability of members to carry out their responsibilities as members of Parliament. In doing so, the cases cited by the member for Trinity—Spadina have been most instructive.

As Mr. Speaker Fraser stated in his ruling in the *Debates* of October 10, 1989, on pages 4457 to 4461:

In order for an obstruction to take place, there would have had to be some action which prevented the House or Members from attending to their duties, or which cast such serious reflections on a Member that he or she was not able to fulfill his or her responsibilities. I would submit that this is not the case in the present situation.

Despite not finding a prima facie case of privilege in that case, Mr. Speaker Fraser did raise serious concerns about the situation, stating that the ad was “objectionable and should never be repeated”.

[Translation]

With respect to the content and the cost of the advertisements, in the ruling given by Madam Speaker Sauvé on October 17, 1980, she stated on page 3781 of the *House of Commons Debates*:

The fact that certain members feel they are disadvantaged by not having the same funds to advertise as does the government, which could possibly be a point of debate, as a matter of impropriety or under any other heading, does not constitute a prima facie case of privilege unless such advertisements themselves constitute a contempt of the House, and to do so there would have to be some evidence that they represent a publication of false, perverted, partial or injurious reports of the proceedings of the House of Commons or misrepresentations of members.

*Government Orders*

•(1515)

[English]

As I indicated when this matter was raised, the issue of the money spent for these advertisements is clearly not a procedural matter.

In addition to these examples, another can be found in 1997, when a question of privilege was raised concerning advertisements made by Health Canada in daily newspapers regarding anti-tobacco legislation that had not yet been adopted by the House. In that case, Mr. Speaker Parent ruled, on March 13, 1997, in the *Debates*, on pages 8987 to 8988, that the advertisement did not give the impression that the House had already passed then Bill C-71 and, therefore, he could not find a prima facie question of privilege.

[Translation]

It is with these precedents in mind that I reviewed the advertisements in question. They contain phrases such as “the Government of Canada is proposing measures”, “These important measures, once in effect,” and “These measures are currently before Parliament”. In my view, the advertisements clearly acknowledge that these measures are not yet in place. I am therefore unable to find evidence of a misrepresentation of the proceedings of the House or of any presumption of the outcome of its deliberations.

[English]

While the hon. members for Scarborough—Agincourt and Trinity—Spadina may disagree with the title and content of these advertisements, this is more a matter of debate than of procedure or privilege. The Chair must therefore conclude, for the same reasons as my predecessors did, that the case before us today does not constitute a prima facie case of privilege or contempt of Parliament.

Once again, I thank the hon. members for Scarborough—Agincourt and Trinity—Spadina for having brought this matter to the attention of the House.

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## ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall  
Ottawa

May 29, 2008

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable Marie Deschamps, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in her capacity as Deputy of the Governor General, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 29th day of May, 2008, at 2:38 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila-Marie Cook

The schedule indicates the bills assented to were Bill S-215, An Act to protect heritage lighthouses—Chapter 16; Bill C-293, An Act respecting the provision of official development assistance abroad—Chapter 17; Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (criminal procedure, language of the accused, sentencing and other amendments)—Chapter 18; and Bill C-459, An Act to establish a

Ukrainian Famine and Genocide ("Holodomor") Memorial Day and to recognize the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-33 as an act of genocide—Chapter 19.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

### NUCLEAR LIABILITY AND COMPENSATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident, be read the third time, and of the motion that this question be now put.

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-5 at the third reading stage. The Bloc Québécois thinks that this bill is important to protect citizens and not to promote nuclear energy. I want to make that clear.

Before I begin my remarks, I would like to thank the people who worked on this bill: the researchers, the members of the committee and the witnesses, as well as all the legislative staff who helped prepare this bill.

Before I explain why we support this bill and defend the amounts in it, I would like to give an overview of the current nuclear energy situation in Canada.

The Minister of Natural Resources recently spoke to the Economic Club of Toronto about the merits of nuclear energy, including a new generation of reactors. By the way, where are those reactors? It is a secret, like all those other things the government keeps secret. Later on in his speech, he mentioned that it would take decades to find a safe disposal site. We agree with him there. It is clear that a site will not be found quickly.

Furthermore, the global partnership launched by Mr. Bush for the reprocessing of irradiated nuclear fuel, which Canada has joined, is light years away from becoming a reality. I would remind the House that, in France, this project was in the works for 15 years before it was abandoned as unworkable. By relying on all the other countries, President Bush thinks it is feasible. So far, no progress has been made on this. Everyone thinks that we will simply be left with nuclear waste to transport and dispose of.

This bill establishes a limit of \$650 million in compensation and we think this is a fair amount. In any case, we could not put this system in place and ask for any more than the \$650 million requested, because the insurance companies would never agree to it. As it is, reinsurance will be needed to make up the difference.

*Government Orders*

We do not think that we could have a situation like that of the United States where full responsibility falls to the companies. With a common fund that varies between \$9 billion and \$11 billion, they share responsibility in the event of an accident. That is not the kind of approach we have taken here. Instead, we decided on an insurance plan that cannot exceed \$650 million. We think this represents a marked improvement over previous legislation, which provided for \$70 million or \$75 million.

This bill, however, has some major gaps. Of course, the government and the entire population should be able to provide all the money needed in the event of an accident. Unfortunately, the calculation of probabilities would suggest that an accident is likely to happen sooner or later, since one occurs every 30 years. Let us hope that it is not in Canada. If, however, that is the case, \$650 million will not be enough. It will be the entire population that will have to pay in order to continue compensating the people affected by the disaster, the conflagration—fire is usually the result—or the radiation.

But the law does not provide for compensation by insurance companies in case of war or sabotage, including terrorist acts. We know that right now, terrorist activity is the greatest threat to nuclear power. That is what both Canada and the United States fear most. Since 2001, Canada's budget for protection from terrorism has quadrupled. I will review the numbers shortly. These costs are not included in the price per kilowatt hour.

• (1520)

These costs are not included because they are for protection, for security agencies. Those budgets do not fall within the Department of Natural Resources' purview.

Information about this energy source is utterly contradictory. Our minister insists on telling us that it is clean energy. Yet it generates waste, and there is a significant accident risk. About 60 accidents happen every year in Canada. They are usually minor, but major accidents could happen.

We are told that radiation is not a problem, even with uranium 235 mining. That is not true. As miners work, radon, a colourless, odourless gas, emanates from the mine walls. As a result, the miners are exposed to radiation. Health-wise, that is even more dangerous than asbestos. The inescapable result is cancer. Mines can be ventilated, but as we all know, it is very hard to ventilate tunnels at the very bottom of mines, where there is the most radon. It is dangerous for miners and for those transporting the ore.

Since 2006, the government has had big problems with nuclear energy. I will list them.

In September 2007, the safety report seriously called into question nuclear safety across Canada. That is why we are now trying to change and comply with international safety standards. Because of them, it will cost much more to renovate existing plants.

There was the isotope crisis. The safety of the Chalk River laboratories was called into question. Then there was the firing of Ms. Keen, the president of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, who was highly qualified but annoyed and embarrassed the government. There was the disorganized crisis management on site.

There was also the study on privatizing Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, an issue that still has not been resolved one way or the other. The latest problem was the failure of MAPLE. It was announced on May 16, not long ago, that the MAPLE reactors would not be brought on stream, because they could not be made functional.

There is still the fragility caused by terrorism. I will come back to this, because it is true. Terrorism targets only two types of energy: nuclear energy and liquefied natural gas at liquefied natural gas terminals. Only in these two areas can terrorism really hit hard. Some people do not believe that and think that hydroelectric dams can be terrorist targets. This would be rather surprising, though. During the last war, people had a hard time destroying hydroelectric dams. Rest assured that terrorists will not attack dams.

However, in the case of nuclear power, you do not need a huge plane to destroy the small buildings that protect the pools of water used to cool nuclear waste. That can be done very easily. It would also be very easy to blow these buildings to pieces by dropping a bomb on one of them. Hence, the threat of terrorism against nuclear power lurks everywhere. We need only think of the transportation of MOX. Wherever there is radioactivity, there can be terrorism.

Furthermore, waste management poses a problem. The minister told us that it will take decades to resolve. He just appointed a commission, the largest we have ever had: some 70 to 75 people will be involved. It will take years to identify a solution.

I would like to bring up another point pertaining to nuclear power. It is a source of energy and that is a provincial jurisdiction. We believe that nuclear energy must be managed by Quebec.

• (1525)

We accept that the safety standards may be Canadian. We are just as interested in preventing Ontario nuclear power plants from blowing up. Yet, I will reiterate that energy is a provincial jurisdiction. By the way, Hydro-Québec is doing a very good job.

Let us go back to the issue of waste. According to the Minister of Natural Resources, Canada is far from finding a location for burying the waste because no community has agreed to have a waste disposal site in its area.

Therefore, we support this bill but with some reservations. The bill must not promote nuclear power. Canadians are not convinced of the future of nuclear power. According to surveys, in spite of all the promotion of nuclear power and all the lobbying, the fact remains that a majority are still against it, particularly in Quebec, where citizens strongly oppose it.

Before we decide to promote nuclear energy, we would have to really consult the public. That includes experts, people knowledgeable about energy and the people who live next to reactors, which is important because they would be the first to be impacted by an accident.

*Government Orders*

We would also need to consult with the people living along the route where the waste would be transported. We remember the 150 municipalities that were against the transportation of MOX in Quebec. The people living in the province where the waste will be buried should also be consulted.

All of these people need to be consulted, not just the pro-nuclear lobbyists with huge sums of money that often comes from governments. In the United States, Bush invested \$18.5 billion in the promotion of nuclear energy.

Given that there are 22 nuclear plants in Canada, it seems reasonable to offer the public insurance that will give them a minimum amount of protection. This should not be used to build other plants, but should protect the ones that already exist.

According to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, Gently-2 in Quebec respects and surpasses the regulatory requirements in all of the safety categories. That is great, but it does not mean that there will never be an accident. In fact, there was one recently.

The budgets allocated for nuclear safety may have quadrupled since the September 11 attacks, but authorities believe that there are still flaws in the system that could one day pose a threat to national security. That is not very reassuring.

We know that security measures at Gently-2 have been stepped up since 2001, but Hydro-Québec has been reluctant to reveal the costs. We can imagine why, even if this corporation does a good job. Even the authorities admit that there is always a possibility of a terrorist attack at any of the existing plants.

I have here an excerpt from a report issued by the CNSC that shows the possibility of accidents in Canada. Earlier I was saying there are roughly 60 accidents every year. An accident occurred two months ago—and the document from the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission talks about an “accident”—involving a fueling machine removing fuel from one of the reactor channels in order to access a process tube and replace the spacer blocks. When it was being moved, the back of the fueling machine broke off and pushed the lift truck against a pillar, which shut the machine off.

The fuel clusters were not affected, but they could have been. If that had happened, they would have spilled outside the cooling water, which could have caused a major accident.

• (1530)

It does not take much to cause an accident. A more serious accident could occur at any given time. Nuclear power is still not safe and is still dangerous.

That is why we want to pass Bill C-5, to protect these generating stations. We would not have to pass such a bill for wind energy. There is no risk of anyone being hit on the head by a rotor blade. We would not have to pass such a bill for solar energy because it is not dangerous. The worst that can happen is that a panel or a pipe breaks. With geothermal we can produce large quantities of electricity and we would not have to legislate that energy either. Why? Because there is no risk of catastrophe with geothermal plants. I toured one this winter in New Zealand. It has been there for 50 years. They have to replace a few pipes now and then, but there is no

danger. The risk of catastrophe only exists with nuclear energy and natural gas terminals, as I was saying earlier.

Fortunately, no radiation leaked from the nuclear generating station during this accident. And the term “accident” does in fact appear in the document. I am not making it up.

I heard my colleague say earlier that if facilities were built underground, it would be less dangerous. That does not solve all the problems. It does not solve the problems with transporting MOX; or with mining and transporting uranium 235; or with safely disposing of spent radioactive materials; or with the use of cooling water and the possibility of leaks after an earthquake. It also does not solve the problem of potential terrorist attacks, or the risks of sabotage, even if facilities are built underground. So it does not solve all the problems. That is why a nuclear power plant, underground or above ground, is a time bomb.

Earlier I spoke about the transportation of MOX. There are 150 municipalities that have spoken out against this type of transportation because they say it is very dangerous. There is currently an international movement on the quality of safety, called the Integrated Safety Review, which is a cut above what we have now. Yes, safety is a good thing, but the problem with this type of safety review is that it increases the cost of facilities by two or three times the estimated amount, especially for facilities in need of repair.

I will use the example of a facility I know, the Gently facility. The cost of renovating this facility had been estimated at \$1.5 billion. Aggel and Baly, people whose job it is to assess the cost of work to be done on nuclear facilities, estimated that if the new standards were applied, the cost would rise to \$2 billion, a significant increase. They also say that this price could very likely go up to \$3 billion, double the original estimate.

However, all that is for a very limited length of time, because that is the problem. I had a graph that I would like to show the House. A nuclear facility produces electricity at peak capacity for only a brief period of time. Looking at the table, we can see that the first nuclear reactors came on line in 1970 and reached peak production in 1995. Since then, they have been declining steadily. They are less and less efficient. Even if they are renovated, they will not last much longer.

Mr. Speaker, I see that I have only a minute left, but I could have talked about nuclear energy all afternoon, as it is an extremely important issue.

At present, safety is not what it should be. The newspapers recently reported that an additional \$93 million was needed for safety.

*Government Orders*

•(1535)

I would like the money spent on nuclear safety to be invested in green energy sources such as wind and geothermal energy. The government would see that other types of projects cost far less and are much safer. We are pro-safety. If the government is really pro-safety, it should not be building any more nuclear facilities.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from the Bloc for his presentation. I have worked with him over the past two years and I know his great concern about creating an environment and an economy where we can move to a green future. It is certainly within the context of this debate. I know his concerns around the expansion of the nuclear industry. He spoke to the need to bring these new energy forms onto a common playing field. That is something I agree with as well.

It is one of the reasons we have put forward so many amendments to this bill, to try to get to a point where we could have a bill that truly represents the real costs of nuclear energy. Across the world, many other countries are taking a different tone about the level of liability that needs to be held by the industry. In Germany, for instance, there is unlimited liability. In the United States, the liability limit is some \$10 billion.

Why does my honourable colleague support this bill even though it does not really bring the nuclear industry to a level playing field in terms of its own responsibility for the liability that may ensue from any kind of accident occurring within a plant?

•(1540)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Western Arctic for his excellent question. We support this bill and hope that it will be adopted. We believe that we have asked for as much as we can. We cannot go any further in terms of insurance. This bill was drafted with that in mind. We could not ask insurers for \$2 or \$3 billion because then we would not have any insurers. We had to be realistic.

I tried to show that we are not necessarily pro-nuclear and that there has to be a thorough assessment of the impact of nuclear development before proceeding. However, we think that \$650 million is a realistic, achievable figure for the 22 existing power plants.

[*English*]

**Mr. Omar Alhabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my honourable colleague for his presentation. I also want to thank him for his excellent work on committee. He is a valuable member of our committee. He was a member of the committee when we conducted the study on AECL earlier this year.

I want to hear his comments on the government's decision about 10 days ago to cancel the MAPLE project without offering any plan or solution to ensure the supply of medical isotopes that many Canadians and citizens of the world rely on. How does he feel about that decision and how does he feel the government is handling it?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I really appreciate his work with the committee.

Currently, the government is at an impasse. MAPLE cannot proceed because the expertise necessary to complete the project is lacking. They aimed too high, too fast. On the other hand, they have to deal with reactors that are at the end of their life cycle.

The government has a hot potato on its hands, as they say. It does not know what to do with it and is just hoping that the existing reactors will last long enough to find an alternative. I have to say that I find that pretty amateurish.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague for his fine speech and I would also like to congratulate him for his work in committee. We are at third reading and this is a bill that has really been examined from every possible angle.

We agree with the members who say that \$650 million is not enough. In my opinion, the status quo is also unacceptable, since the current amount of compensation is \$75 million. This is completely unacceptable and illustrates the negligence shown by this federal government and previous governments that did nothing about this situation.

I know my colleague is equally concerned about nuclear safety and recent events have been very worrisome.

Can he tell us about his concerns regarding the statements made by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, which, as we learned from *La Presse*, has said that it does not have enough financial and human resources to properly carry out its mission?

Can he please comment on what was revealed in yesterday's edition of *La Presse*?

•(1545)

**Mr. Christian Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry for her very insightful question. I touched on this quickly earlier, saying that in the past year, CNSC has had to increase its safety and staffing budget by \$2.8 million.

Their budget is \$93 million. That was in the papers and it seems realistic to me considering the risks involved. However, we have to realize how expensive nuclear energy is for all citizens. I am not talking about those who pay for electricity, because they pay for it whether it comes from natural gas or wind power. People who buy electricity do not pay for safety. That is another government budget and everyone has to pay for safety. It is quite alarming, but in the meantime, we can be glad that the CNSC is being vigilant and calling for increased safety. There is a better chance of avoiding accidents with a call for increased safety and if we use the integrated system I mentioned earlier that meets the international standard. Canada is lagging behind in that respect.

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, in reference to my previous question to the hon. member, I want to go back to that because he stated that the insurance companies would not be able to put forward the type of coverage that would be required for the industry if they had a larger amount than \$650 million. In the United States, the Americans extend the coverage to almost \$10 billion. Certainly, many of the reactors in Canada are located in areas that are adjacent to cities, much like the United States.

The position of the industry has been that the insurance companies are not willing to cover the larger amount. How can we be sure? How do the companies that run the reactors in the United States achieve this level of liability insurance within their country? Why is it so that we as Canadians in our country cannot achieve the same thing through our insurance companies?

[Translation]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the comments by my colleague from Western Arctic because this gives me the opportunity to point out that in the United States, there are 144 nuclear generating stations that share what they call one "pot". They pool all their money together, between \$9 billion and \$11 billion. That is why this varies, since it is based on the assets that are invested.

There is no insurance policy. They do not deal with an insurance company. They never would have gotten such insurance from any company. They pool their money together. Here in Canada we have just 22 generating stations. Even if they pooled their money together, they obviously would not come up with \$9 billion or \$10 billion. That would force them to close. It may be a good idea, but that is not the issue. This is a matter of protecting the public.

The insurance companies have said that when it comes to protecting the public, they cannot go any higher than \$650 million. It will be hard enough to find insurers. We will have to find reinsurers to get to \$650 million.

[English]

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is a challenging topic for the House. One of the things I have heard in this discussion about Bill C-5, an act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident, is that we should support the new limits proposed in this bill because they are better than the old ones. It seems to me that argument, in itself, is fundamentally flawed because it is like saying half a loaf is better than no loaf at all.

We have seen other pieces of legislation proposed in the House of Commons that we subsequently had to go in and fix because they were inadequate. One of them was the voter identification piece of legislation, which disenfranchised over a million rural voters. Because the House did not perform its due diligence, we passed a piece of legislation that was deeply flawed.

In addition, we are being asked to say that we have trust and confidence in the current Conservative government to manage this particular file. Of course, the whole shemuzzle around Chalk River was such that I would argue that Canadians do not have confidence in the government to deal with this in a fair and reasonable manner.

New Democrats have been raising issues and concerns around this piece of legislation. In particular, I want to talk about the very good work that the member for Western Arctic has done. He proposed many amendments to try to improve this piece of legislation and, unfortunately, they were not supported by members of the House.

In addition, I know that the members for Vancouver Island North and Victoria have also raised concerns around some of the challenges in this piece of legislation.

I want to talk a bit about where this bill came from. In order to facilitate the development of the nuclear industry in Canada, the federal government has developed legislation to limit the amount of damages a nuclear plant operator would have to pay out should there be an accident causing radiological contamination to property outside the plant area itself. Such legislation is necessary as private insurers refuse to compensate for damage due to a nuclear accident or incident.

The current legislation dates from the 1970s and is woefully inadequate with a liability limit of \$75 million. By comparison, a new mine usually has to post an environmental bond of approximately \$50 million. This low level of liability is creating an impediment for foreign, particularly American, private industry for purchasing Canadian nuclear industries.

Under American law, a foreign victim of an accident caused by an American headquartered company can sue for damages under American law if the foreign law is insufficient by international standards. These changes bring the legislation in line with minimum international standards. It is important to note that.

We look to Canada often to become a leader in any number of areas and, sadly, what we have seen over this last two years in particular is an erosion of Canada's leadership on many files, such as international human rights obligations.

We have certainly seen the government abandon our leadership role around the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by refusing to sign on to it, one of only three countries left. Australia reversed its position.

On the environment, we have certainly seen the government stonewall in every way possible with the Kyoto protocol and trying to demonstrate it is a leader as it is actually rejoining the age of the dinosaurs, I would suggest.

Bill C-5 limits the total liability of a nuclear operator to \$650 million, which is the bottom of the international average. For amounts above that number, a special tribunal would be set up by the Minister of Natural Resources and further funds would come out of the public purse. This basically means that a nuclear operator would only have to pay out a maximum of \$650 million while the public would be on the hook for millions, possibly billions, of dollars in case of an accident.

I mentioned the fact that the member for Western Arctic put forward 35 amendments and I am going to talk a bit about those amendments. One of the clauses he proposed was in relation to the removal of the \$650 million international bottom line standard and actually having the full gamut available.

*Government Orders*

• (1550)

In that context, I want to quote from the speech given by the member for Western Arctic:

One of the key amendments that we are looking for is to take out any limit on nuclear liability. Unlimited amounts would probably be the preferred method to deal with it, just as Germany does. It has an unlimited liability on nuclear facilities. That means that whatever the costs are, when there is an accident those who are responsible for the plant will need to pay those costs.

The \$650 million limit set in this bill pales next to that of our major trading partner, the United States of America, which has an \$8 billion to \$10 billion liability ceiling on its nuclear facilities. Most of our nuclear facilities are located in highly populated areas in southern Canada, areas similar to where the nuclear facilities are located in the United States.

The Conservative members often tout U.S. policies on things, so surely they would want to be in line with one of our major trading partners on this very serious issue of nuclear liability. If, after examining the issue, the United States has determined that \$8 billion to \$10 billion is a reasonable amount for nuclear liability, that would seem something Canada should also seriously examine, although, as the member for Western Arctic has proposed, there should not be a limit on the nuclear liability.

I want to put this in the context of where this came from. The Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage tried to address some of the very serious concerns around civil liability around the world. This is a bit of background on what was happening:

In September 1997, the government took a significant step forward in improving the liability régime for nuclear damage. At a diplomatic conference at IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] Headquarters in Vienna, 8-12 September 1997, delegates from over 80 States adopted a Protocol to Amend the 1963 Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage and also adopted a Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage. The Protocol sets the possible limits of the operator's liability at not less than 300 million Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) (roughly equivalent to 400 million US dollars). The Convention on Supplementary Compensation defines additional amounts to be provided through contributions by States Parties on the basis of installed nuclear capacity and UN rate of assessment. The Convention is an instrument to which all States may adhere regardless of whether they are parties to any existing nuclear liability conventions or have nuclear installations on their territories. The Protocol contains inter alia a better definition of nuclear damage (now also addressing the concept of environmental damage and preventive measures), extends the geographical scope of the Vienna Convention, and extends the period during which claims may be brought for loss of life and personal injury. It also provides for jurisdiction of coastal states over actions incurring nuclear damage during transport. Taken together, the two instruments should substantially enhance the global framework for compensation well beyond that foreseen by existing Conventions. Before the action in September 1997, the international liability regime was embodied primarily in two instruments, i.e. the Vienna Convention on Civil liability for Nuclear Damage of 1963 and the Paris Convention on Third Party Liability in the Field of Nuclear Energy of 1960 linked by the Joint Protocol adopted in 1988. The Paris Convention was later built up by the 1963 Brussels Supplementary Convention. These Conventions are based on the civil law concept and share the following main principles:

There are a number of principles outlined in these conventions, but I just want to talk about a couple of them.

One is that the liability is channelled exclusively to the operators of the nuclear installations. Another is that the liability of the operator is absolute; for example, the operator is held liable irrespective of fault. Another is that the operator must maintain insurance of other financial security for an amount corresponding to his liability. If such security is insufficient, the installation state is obliged to make up the difference up to the limit of the operator's liability.

It is on this last point where we are very concerned that Canadian taxpayers may be on the hook for the difference between the \$650 million and the millions and millions over and above that amount which could be incurred in a nuclear incident.

We often hear Conservative members talk about being concerned about the taxpayers' purse and accountability. I would suggest they make sure to bring in legislation that actually does protect taxpayers from being on the hook for a potential incident.

I want to turn for a moment to the economics of nuclear power. One of the things that is important in this consideration is the age and the state of nuclear facilities, and the kind of investment that is made for future nuclear stations, if that is the direction the government should choose to go in. However, I know that many members in the House and certainly many of my constituents do not support nuclear power as a viable option.

• (1555)

In its paper "The Economics of Nuclear Power", Greenpeace provided an analysis of a variety of elements that go into building and maintaining nuclear power stations. I am not going to deal in depth with a number of them, but the executive summary states:

The civilian nuclear power industry has been in operation for over fifty years. During such a long period, it would be usual for technological improvements and experience to result in learning and subsequently enhancements in economic efficiency. However, the nuclear industry has not followed this pattern.

It provided an analysis on the rising construction costs, rising construction times, falling construction demand and untested technology. It talks about generation III and III+ reactors and the fact that this is untested technology for the longer term.

Of course, when we are talking about liability, we want to understand a variety of factors in terms of the condition of the nuclear industry in Canada. In talking about an unfavourable marketplace, it states:

The economics of nuclear power have always been questionable. The fact that consumers or governments have traditionally borne the risk of investment in nuclear power plants meant that utilities were insulated from these risks and were able to borrow money at rates reflecting the reduced risk to investors and lenders.

Again, it comes back to insurance. The taxpayers could be on the hook. They are in a position where the industry itself is not bearing the true cost of what it takes to maintain and operate a nuclear power plant. In this case I would argue once again that the limit to liability should be removed. It is the nuclear industry itself that should have the full responsibility for insurance around operating these plants.

This paper, "The Economics of Nuclear Power", goes on to talk about a nuclear renaissance. It states:

### *Government Orders*

The much touted “nuclear renaissance” assumes that new plants will be built cheaper than the alternatives, on time and to cost, that they will operate reliably and that the cost of dealing with long-term liabilities such as waste disposal and decommissioning will stabilize. However, wishing for an outcome is not sufficient to make it fact. Until nuclear power actually meets all these criteria on a sustained basis, the additional risks of nuclear investment will be large.

It goes on to talk about the fact that the nuclear industry only survives because of significant subsidies. It states:

It is now 29 years since the last order for a new nuclear power plant in the U.S. and 34 years since the last order for a plant that was actually completed. Utilities suffered heavy losses in the 1980s as economic regulators became increasingly unwilling to pass huge cost overruns from nuclear projects on to consumers, forcing utilities to bear the extra costs. The introduction of power markets has meant that plant owners are now fully exposed not just to the risk of cost overruns but also to plant unreliability.

Again it is all of these factors that have to be considered when we are talking about potential risk to the taxpayer in Canada.

I want to talk a bit about decommissioning. Decommissioning of these plants is a long and complicated process. Many times the costs for decommissioning are passed on decades into the future for future generations. Of course, when the costs for decommissioning at today's current rates are considered, they are often completely out of line with what the eventual decommissioning costs will be.

With respect to funding long term liabilities, the Greenpeace paper, “The Economics of Nuclear Power”, states:

There is a moral imperative for the “polluters” to take all reasonable measures to ensure that those that have to perform the cleanup are given sufficient money to do the job. This imperative has three main dimensions:

Estimates of the expected cost should be conservative or pessimistic, especially where the cost is not well established so that funds are not inadequate because the cost is greater than expected;

Funds collected from consumers should be placed in very low risk investments to minimize the risk that the funds will be lost. Such investments inevitably yield a low interest rate;

Funds should not be accessible by the company that owns the plant other than for decommissioning purposes.

The Greenpeace paper refers to the experience of the United Kingdom:

The experience of the United Kingdom in dealing with long term liabilities is salutary, with costs consistently underestimated and provisions not adequately safeguarded.

There is certainly experience throughout the world which says that the true cost and liabilities for operating these plants are not borne by the plant operators. Costs are often underestimated, in the construction phase and subsequently in the decommissioning phase and at some point taxpayers are on the hook for this. That does not seem to be a responsible way to proceed with this.

• (1600)

In a conversation about nuclear power and nuclear liability, one of the other things that has to come up is whether or not this is the best use of taxpayers' money and whether or not we should actually be investing our time and our energy in alternative energy strategies. The document, “The Economics of Nuclear Power”, talks about energy efficiency and renewable electricity sources:

Energy efficiency must be the cornerstone of future energy policies. The potential for energy efficiency is huge. According to the French Ministry of Economy, changes in the production, transmission and use of energy (including transport) could result in a halving of global energy consumption—from the business as usual scenario—resulting in the saving of 9,000 million tonnes of oil equivalent...per year by 2050.

This is in terms of the conservation end of it and using more efficient appliances, more efficient automobiles, more efficient home heating, and more efficient building and retrofitting of housing and commercial and industrial buildings. We need to pay full attention and put our resources toward improving energy efficiency in this country.

The other piece is renewable electricity sources. In the context of a global study, it was found that hydroelectricity and wind energy are expected to deliver the biggest increases in electricity production by 2020. In the context of renewable energy sources, Canada is lagging behind the rest of the world.

My province of British Columbia is fortunate because a significant portion of its electricity comes from hydroelectric sources. The dams were built many years ago so the environmental damage has already been done. British Columbia is in a fortunate position because it has a fairly clean energy source.

Many of the provinces in Canada, such as Ontario, have been under pressure to build new nuclear facilities because they have not invested in some of the other more environmentally friendly, cleaner, renewable energy sources. That is why this bill is an important piece of legislation. If people are starting to propose the addition of new nuclear facilities, it is important that the plant owners bear the true cost of building those plants.

Canada does not have a comprehensive strategy from coast to coast to look at the needs of Canadians in terms of electricity sources. Recently, a newspaper story stated that the government of Nunavut is spending 25% of its budget on diesel because it has not had the support of the federal government to develop alternative energy strategies. As fuel prices climb in this country communities are going to be increasingly marginalized because they do not have access to other tools and resources that we should have been developing over the last 20 years.

The member for Western Arctic proposed a number of amendments in order that the bill would better suit the needs of the Canadian public. Because those amendments were not supported, the NDP is not in a position to support this piece of legislation.

• (1605)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I entertain questions and comments, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer, Minister of the Environment; the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Ethics; the hon. member for Gatineau, Official Languages.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I share many of the same concerns as the NDP member, and I understand her worries about this bill. However, I think that she agrees that the status quo was no longer acceptable.

*Government Orders*

I am very disappointed today. When we talk about nuclear liability, we should also be talking about nuclear safety. But this morning the NDP sided with the government to keep the Standing Committee on Natural Resources from talking about nuclear safety at the Chalk River laboratory, isotopes and the MAPLE reactors. It is discouraging to see the NDP talking about the importance of nuclear liability, yet this morning they sided with the Conservative government against a study we had committed to.

I would like the deputy who just spoke to tell us where the consistency is between this morning's decision to block the nuclear review and her interest in nuclear liability. I would really like to hear her explanation.

• (1610)

[*English*]

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, that is not my understanding of what happened. I know the member for Vancouver Island North has been pushing hard for a review of this matter. I hardly believe that we would be aligned with the Conservatives on issues around renewable energy and nuclear liability. It does not seem possible given the context of what we have been talking about.

We do share concerns around the inadequacy of the current limits. However, it is unfortunate that the Bloc was not able to support the amendments put forward by the member for Western Arctic. Those amendments would have ensured we were able to protect the liability of Canadian taxpayers from nuclear incidents.

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to get the member's views on what is happening internationally. Canada, for quite some time now, has not had a new nuclear facility, nor have that many been built in the United States. However, in other countries there have been quite a number of new nuclear facilities and new technologies vis-à-vis the disposition and storage of waste, especially in France.

We are certainly under no obligation to follow what is going on in some of the G-7 or G-20 countries but would this legislation conform to what is going on in this area in other developed countries?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that we are again at the bottom of the international standards with this particular legislation and once again Canada is in a position of playing catch-up with other countries.

The amendment put forward by the member for Western Arctic to remove the \$650 million liability and make it an unlimited liability that the plant operators would be responsible for, would have been an opportunity for Canada to demonstrate some leadership.

I talked about some of the new generation of technology when I was speaking to this. Some of the newer generation of technology is still relatively unproven. I cannot remember in which country it was being implemented, but the Generation III and III+ reactors are being implemented. However, these reactors have not been around for a sufficient period of time to demonstrate whether they will be efficient enough or whether the cost will justify them, particularly in light of the liability.

Because Canada, in the past, has not appropriately funded places like Chalk River, we are way behind the mark on this. We probably are years behind in terms of taking any kind of leadership role.

**Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a comment and ask the member a question.

Unfortunately, the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry said that the NDP was somehow in cahoots with the Conservatives by agreeing to study the issue of greening of electricity in Canada, which we are very interested in, while all the time the nuclear liability bill was at committee, the Bloc was agreeing with the Conservatives and not supporting our amendment. I am confused that when we agree on one hand and disagree on the other that we are somehow in cahoots.

When I spoke to the bill earlier, I mentioned that some of the programs the government had in place, such as the ecoenergy program, were inadequate and that members from my community and other communities had written to tell me that.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan spoke about alternative energies to nuclear, which we should be advocating, but the member for Cambridge basically told me that I was not doing my job and telling people that these programs were not working well.

I just received an email from a woman telling me that the program does not include solar panels, wind or electric heating. She has provided the link so that he can better understand the program. She called on the member to issue an apology to me, which I found quite flattering.

I just wonder if the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan could expand on some of the things that she is hearing in her riding from constituents who are not able to access the programs because they are inadequate.

• (1615)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Vancouver Island North for her work on trying to promote green renewable energy sources.

On Vancouver Island many homeowners are suffering because of the rising fuel prices. People are having trouble deciding whether to pay for food or heating.

With regard to accessing the programs the Conservative government put forward, I have heard consistently from people in my riding that it takes tremendous effort for very little return. Many people have simply given up, if they can even find the information to begin with.

I would echo the constituent of the member for Vancouver Island North who wrote her about the challenges with the program. If we are truly serious about this, we need to actually put money into retrofits and ensure they are accessible and available, particularly for middle and low income families.

We also need to ensure that programs around fuel efficient cars are such that they do support the greening of the auto sector, along with a number of other initiatives that would help us actually conserve energy and make us much more productive and efficient in those areas.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are debating Bill C-5 today at third reading, which is quite an important bill in the scheme of things.

The need for the bill was generated over a number of years. Suffice to say that the nuclear power option and the use of nuclear power plants for energy production began here after the second world war and was highly regulated under a statute that stayed pretty much the same for most of those years, and, as in so many other areas, an update or a modernization is required. This particular bill addresses, for the most part, the liability component of the envelope.

The area is highly regulated. No matter what we do involving the nuclear industry, it is always highly regulated. Some people in Canada do not believe we should be as reliant on nuclear energy as we are. The fact is that in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick, there is substantial reliance. I think in Ontario, one-third of the current power needs are generated by nuclear energy. I am saying that to indicate that the nuclear generation option is not going away. We will continue to rely on it for many years and some of our provinces have made that decision.

To be sure, there are other sources of energy. We are capable of improving our production of hydroelectric energy. We continue to generate electrical energy from gas. We may be using coal in some parts of Canada. Our neighbour to the south is certainly using it in some parts the country. Wind and solar options are there too but nuclear will remain.

Is it efficient? Is it cost effective? Is it clean? Is it safe? Is it renewable? All those questions are there and are part of the continuing debate.

The bill does not alter any of those but it does recognize that there have been a lot of changes in Canadian society, in the world, in the financial world, in the insurance world and in our perspectives on nuclear energy and the risks associated with it that caused us to modernize the statute that governs this very regulated industry.

If people wanted to produce some solar energy, some wind energy in a particular province, they would call it co-generation and plug it into the electricity grid, and they could probably do it without much regulation. However, if they were to try to do some nuclear generation, they could not move without a licence in their back pockets or maybe a dozen licences.

I should also say that Canadians, whether or not they know it, are actually quite reliant on some radioactive processes, both for health care and for some industrial processes. Radioactivity and radioactive isotopes are found in many of our communities. They are closely controlled and serve us all very well, whether we actually know it or not.

To be sure, there are some background radiation sources with low level radiation. They are found in various places across the country, including where uranium is mined or has been mined and where there are tailings. We generally manage those things fairly well and the Government of Canada is quite involved in that. Wherever it is higher than background level of radiation, the Government of Canada believes it has a jurisdiction and it acts.

The bill itself re-establishes a revised liability scheme for civil liability and compensation for this envelope of activity. It is worth pointing out that the previous statute had a maximum liability for an operator of a paltry \$75 million.

• (1620)

These days, when it comes to potential liability for anything, whether we have some bad peanut butter, or drive a car, or a truck, or a train or fly an aircraft, \$75 million is not a lot of coverage for potential liability. That has been recognized now for some time. The bill would correct that by increasing the limit up to \$650 million.

Some may say that is not a lot either. However, the bill was reviewed by the standing committee of the House of Commons and that limit was selected after looking at the basic principles of nuclear liability.

I will reiterate the four principles for the record. First, the operator is the party that is liable, nobody else. Second, the operator of the nuclear facility is exclusively liable for damages if there is an accident. Third, the operator must carry insurance. Fourth, the liability is by statute limited. There are time limitations and dollar limitations, in this case running up to \$650 million. This is important. Those who supply materials to the nuclear operator do not face liability for second and third party liability. They can safely deliver the commodity or service to the nuclear operator and they do not have to deal with the potential liability if there is an accident.

Fortunately we have not had any serious accidents in Canada. There have been accidents in two, three or four in various places around the world. The one most people will recall is Chernobyl. The implications of that have been experienced right around the world for all these years.

The factors involved in picking this number include the foreseeable risk. That means the amount chosen was based on what an operator might anticipate as a risk and not from a catastrophic unforeseen event. Our nuclear reactors all have second and third backup fail-safe systems.

This legislation would bring Canada up to par and to the same level as most of the other countries that produce nuclear energy, certainly the western countries. We would get to the \$650 million limit not in one slice, but in several years of phase-in, which would be done by regulation.

Under the bill, the government and Parliament will be able to review this every five years. Things may change some more in the coming years.

The statute takes account of what are actually huge changes in the insurance industry. The insurance will have to be obtained only through an approved insurer. The government and the House have recognized that there are other ways of insuring these days, which perhaps were not available 50 years ago. They include government guarantees, letters of credit, some types of self-insurance and the big one of reinsurance.

*Government Orders*

In some cases some carriers of insurance will not insure unless they have the ability to reinsure, and that means spreading out the risk to shareholders and investors in different parts of the jurisdiction or even around the world. A lot of major insurance contracts now are reinsured to spread the risk around the world. The reinsurance mechanism, which is now an industry standard, can be used here where an approved insurer will not insure without the reinsurance piece.

• (1625)

The insurance and civil liability also cover the movement of radioactive materials, either the uranium coming in if it is above the level and the spent uranium in the fuel rods or whatever else might be radioactive and transported. There have not been any accidents that I am aware of right now, but there can be with these things and people can be harmed, so we are insuring against those too.

It is notable that since the nuclear industry began, we have realized that sometimes the harm associated with an exposure to radiation will not be seen for many years. Therefore, the time limitation on a claim for bodily injury from exposure to radiation is now pushed out to 30 years. The other limitation for property damage is 10 years, but for bodily injury and death there is a 30 year limitation period.

In the event that a nuclear accident crossed a provincial boundary, if we did not have this legislation, we would probably have litigation going on in two separate provincial court systems. There is a provision in the bill that where there is a boundary straddling circumstance, the claim may be made in the Federal Court.

The last thing I want to say about that is in the event of a major accident, the government may establish a nuclear claims tribunal, in other words, to take it out of the courts and establish a special tribunal to deal with actual liability claims and any awards that will have to be made.

What the government has provided for in the bill and what the House has approved is a certain amount of free market interplay with the insurance and reinsurance scheme. In theory, that should keep the insurance costs down or at least competitive and the nuclear station power operators will have the benefit of having improved accessibility to insurance and improved cost efficiencies.

The proposed bill also provides for a reciprocating arrangement with other countries. There is always the risk that a nuclear operator is a corporation that straddles international boundaries or the nuclear operation may be close to a boundary. For example, in my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River, the very east end of the city of Toronto, is only 10 or 20 kilometres from the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station. The generating station is on the shore of Lake Ontario and that itself is only a few kilometres from the boundary of the United States of America.

There is the ability under this statute for the Government of Canada to enter into an agreement with another country to deal with the possibility of nuclear accidents and liabilities in a reciprocating agreement where it would accept our procedures and we might accept its. The ability is there and in the increasingly global environment, that is probably a good thing.

I commend the committee that looked at the bill. I cannot assume anything about third reading, but my party certainly will support it. My hope is that we will get to third reading fairly soon.

\* \* \*

• (1630)

**MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE**

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed certain bills.

\* \* \*

**NUCLEAR LIABILITY COMPENSATION ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident, be read the third time and passed, and of the motion that this question be now put.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to some of the issues that my hon. colleague brought up. We were concerned with many of them. We put forward amendments, both at committee and in the House, over the time we dealt with the bill, which is a considerable length of time. One of them is the reinsurance provisions.

The hon. member alluded to the reinsurance provisions within the bill and said that the insurance companies could reach out to other insurance companies. If they felt they could not take this risk on themselves, they could reinsure with other insurance companies.

However, in the bill the federal government is empowered to be the reinsurer of the nuclear facilities. If they are unable to accomplish the insurance with the insurance company, the government can step in and become the reinsurer. In other words, it can take over the liability of the insurance for the particular facility. We had a lot of trouble with this clause. We did not see this as setting up the nuclear industry as separate, distinct and on its own two feet. We saw this as the government would be brought into insuring high-risk nuclear facilities.

How does this match up to understanding that the industry will work in an unsubsidized, unsupported manner from the government? How will this phase, which we tried to eliminate, prevent government from holding the liability for the nuclear plants that are not up to the standards that regular insurers would cover?

• (1635)

**Mr. Derek Lee:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, either on his own or with his party, was not comfortable with the Government of Canada stepping in, or I suppose a provincial government could as well, as a reinsurer or a guarantor. I take it he is referring to the guarantee piece for a government. My understanding of the bill is a government could become a guarantor of an insurance contract or be a surety for a reinsurance contract.

*Government Orders*

The member is correct in suggesting that having the government do it is a non-market mechanism in many respects will appear to be a benefit or a subsidy to the nuclear industry. However, it is also a fact that it is highly unlikely we would have any nuclear capability in our country if it were not for a government infrastructure that regulated it in the first place. Most people will recognize that the essential component of the nuclear industry carries a lot of risk with it. It is simply not something we can carry around in our back pocket. Therefore, the presence of the government should not be a surprise.

I know the bill offers the potential, with government approval, of normal insurance-reinsurance mechanisms so the risk is spread around and the costs of the insurance are kept within reason.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to subclause 26(1) in the bill. It states:

The Minister may enter into an agreement with an approved insurer under which Her Majesty in right of Canada reinsures some or all of the risk assumed by the insurer under insurance referred to in subsection 24(1).

Subclause 26(2) states:

The risks that may be reinsured are those that, in the Minister's opinion, would not be assumed by an approved insurer without the agreement or those that are prescribed by regulation.

Subclause 26(3) states:

The reinsurance agreement may provide for the payment of premiums to Her Majesty in right of Canada.

Quite clearly, we see that the government then becomes the reinsurer. It is collecting the premiums. It is assuming the risk. This is not a question of a guarantee. This is a question of the government actually providing the services of the private sector in insurance.

We tried to remove this from the bill so we would have a more level playing field for nuclear energy, where nuclear energy had to stand on its own two feet. Does the member not think this should be excised from the bill?

**Mr. Derek Lee:** No, Mr. Speaker, the government role is there. The member has read the sections. The government is capable of reinsuring. The government, by that same wording, is apparently capable of seeking other reinsurance itself to reinsure its own reinsurance.

The insurance risk is therefore spread around. It is done partly in the market and partly with government. To the extent that government alone takes on the risk, I accept that there is a potential saving to the nuclear operator or a potential risk placed on the taxpayer account.

Is it a subsidy? It does not have to be called a subsidy, but it certainly is government participation in assuming a part of the risk of a nuclear operation and potential liability.

• (1640)

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. friend and high school colleague a very important question. We have just had information that the MAPLE reactor, which was going to enable us to diversify our ability to produce radioactive isotopes for medical purposes, is now not going to be opened. In fact, it is going to be closed after many millions of dollars of the taxpayers' money have been used to

make sure that this reactor was going to be up and running to take the pressure off our 50-year-old NRU reactor at Chalk River.

What does my hon. colleague think about the fact that the government has decided not to open this reactor at all? Does he believe that the government should forthwith try to enable Canadians to have access to a more diversified supply of radioactive isotopes that can be used for the medical procedures that so many people rely on?

**Mr. Derek Lee:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague and I are high school mates from many years ago.

I would regret it if something the Government of Canada did or did not do would not facilitate the orderly and reasonably market-oriented production of isotopes for health care and other purposes. Canada has been a leader in this field for many years.

That area of industry would not be here if government had not enabled it, facilitated it and got it running in the first place. We have a lot of skills in it. I would regret it if the government feels it is not able to foster increased production, because the population of the world is growing and medical use of isotopes is growing. I would regret that.

I would call upon the government to look at it again. In my view, the government should not have cold feet. I only have to mention the Avro Arrow and I do not have to go into any other adjectives, but this is a field where Canadian leadership has been strong. Our skills are strong. I would really strongly encourage the government to ensure that we continue to be strong and productive in exporting to the world these very valuable isotope commodities.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Mr. Speaker, many people may not be aware that Canada is the largest producer of uranium. I know that in his province the Speaker knows this very well.

Does my colleague feel this is an opportunity for Canada to do a better job not only of marketing our uranium production but also of marrying that with our fine ability to produce CANDU reactors? Does my colleague feel that the production of CANDU reactors and nuclear power can be one element, just one, in the array of solutions that we have to move us away from greenhouse gas emissions and the burning of fossil fuels from which those come?

I personally feel that in order for us to deal with greenhouse gas emissions and reduce global warming we will require an array of solutions. There is no one magic bullet, but nuclear power certainly has its place, and Canadians have, quite excitingly, an area of excellence in the nuclear field.

Does my colleague feel that the Government of Canada, through the Department of International Trade and the Minister of International Trade, could do a better job of being able to export this capability of our CANDU nuclear reactors and our ability to marry that up with the sale of uranium to reduce the burning of fossil fuels internationally?

**Mr. Derek Lee:** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, the marketplace has caught up with Canada's wealth of uranium. That commodity now has been substantially bid up on world markets, to the point where we can hardly recognize the pricing any more, but the same thing has happened with oil, nickel, copper and many other commodities.

*Government Orders*

Clearly, our wealth in this particular commodity, as well as our world recognized expertise in medical radioactive isotopes, are pluses for this country in the 21st century. These are 21st century jobs.

As the member points out, the challenge of greenhouse gases is a huge one. As a globe, we are looking down the gun barrel at a huge greenhouse gas problem.

Although the nuclear power generation envelope is expensive and complex and carries risks with it, on the question of greenhouse gases it is a no-brainer. Very low greenhouse gas is associated with the whole stream of production of nuclear energy. There are certainly some greenhouse gases, because the uranium has to be mined.

I would just caution the government to take note that in the field of nuclear fission and the production of nuclear energy using uranium, whether it is the Candu system using heavy water or the other systems in use around the world, these ought to be promoted for use responsibly. It is not every country that can take on the challenge of producing energy using uranium, but many countries can and I think many countries should.

Canada has an expertise. It has an export. The same holds—

• (1645)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I cannot get hon. members to wind up when they will not look at me.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure today to speak to Bill C-5, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident.

The bill would replace the 1976 Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act and would establish a clear regime in the event of a nuclear accident. The bill establishes a compensation and civil liability regime to address damages resulting from radiation in the event of a radioactive release.

I want to speak a little about the nuclear industry, how it relates to the bill and Canadians, and how it relates to our energy consumption and industry.

Before I go into that, I want to speak about Canada being a world leader in uranium, uranium being the substrate utilized in our reactors. Canada, as I said during questions, is the world's leading producer of uranium. We produce 22% of the world's uranium, which is quite exciting for us.

What is very interesting is that the electricity generated from our Canadian uranium worldwide avoids more than 650 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually. It is really quite amazing that the utilization of uranium actually reduces that much carbon dioxide, which, as we know, is one of the greenhouse gas emissions.

Uranium is a metal and is found in abundance in certain parts of the world. We are lucky that we have it in our country. It is able to generate very large amounts of energy. We know about the possible costs of nuclear utilization. We know what happened in Chernobyl. Perhaps a little later on I will get to how that disaster happened.

However, nuclear energy does not pollute the air and neither does it produce smog or rain. It does not produce any greenhouse gas emissions such as carbon dioxide, methane or nitrous oxide. Nuclear energy in Canada avoids the emission of about 90 million tonnes of greenhouse gases per year.

What does that mean in terms of cars, for example? Essentially it is equivalent of taking 18 million cars or trucks off the road. That is a staggering amount when we apply it to the real world. The amount of uranium we produce through our reactors in our country is the equivalent of taking 18 million cars off the road every single year, which is about 12% of our greenhouse gas emissions. It also reduces by 10% the amount of smog that would be produced if those cars were allowed to continue on our roads.

Much is made of the factor of radiation emissions from nuclear power plants. It is very interesting that a lot of mythology surrounds it, but I think it is wise for us to put it in context. We know there is a natural supply of radiation in the world. Radon is ubiquitous in nature, and the amount of radiation that we receive from travelling in a plane, for example, is quite extraordinary.

Many of us travel by plane to come to work in these hallowed halls. For those of us who travel from the west coast of Canada to Ottawa, we receive, from a one-way flight, the equivalent of 15 to 20 times the amount of radiation a person would receive if he or she lived on the perimeter of a nuclear power plant. On one trip from Vancouver to Toronto, the amount of radiation we pick up during that one flight, and not a return flight, would be 15 to 20 times the amount of radiation we would pick up if we lived on the perimeter of a nuclear power plant for a period of one year. If we were to travel once across the country one-way, it would be the equivalent of living next to a nuclear power plant for 15 to 20 years. It is quite phenomenal.

It is also important to know that in Canada we have quite a good nuclear safety regulation process. We have not had any substantial accidents in our country, unlike others. The big problem most of us have and are concerned about is the disposition of the spent nuclear rods.

• (1650)

These materials are still of danger. They are buried in the Cambrian Shield, for example, deep within the earth's core. It is done quite safely. There are concerns of course as to the transportation of those materials, but we have very good procedures in our country.

The same cannot be said for other parts of the world, and one of the challenges that I think everybody has, and that I might say is receiving short shrift in terms of the ability of our government to address it in its foreign policy perspective, is the loss of fissile material.

We know, for example, that one of the objectives of terrorist groups is to acquire fissile material, not necessarily to build a bomb, but in essence to use what is called a dirty bomb where they actually take the nuclear material, pad C4 or dynamite around it and blow it up. The effect is that this nuclear material is spread in an isolated area, affecting people in the immediate vicinity of the blast zone, and also there are long term effects of being exposed to nuclear material which can be an array of cancers and other health problems.

*Government Orders*

The challenge therefore is how we can secure that material, and I will give one anecdote. The Russians had backpack nuclear devices, small nuclear devices that were on backpacks, and when asked where these backpacks were, a key general in the Russian army, a very senior general, said, "I do not know". Russia cannot account for the backpack nukes that they built during the cold war. That has to be very worrisome to most of us.

Therefore, when the government actually gets around to appointing a foreign minister on a permanent basis, one of the goals of the minister should be to work with his or her counterparts in the United States. I know for a fact that Congress is very concerned about lost nukes and lost fissile material from other parts of the world, particularly Russia and Eastern Europe where it is much easier to acquire this material and the controls on this material are more difficult.

I mentioned Chernobyl. Many people like to equate the fact that because Chernobyl occurred, somehow we are going to have a Chernobyl in Canada. What happened in Chernobyl was that the actual workers in the institute were playing a game. They had turned off all the fail-safe mechanisms, turned off all the redundancies to stop an event from occurring to see how high the temperature would go within the reactor core, with catastrophic results.

However, that was a human failure that occurred, not a failure of the system itself. We know that we can always pervert a system if there is enough determination to do that.

The amount of waste that we have within our own reactors is relatively small and the amount is quite well controlled. The benefits, as I mentioned before, in terms of the production of energy and electricity is vast. The benefits to our environment are quite considerable and it is very important to actually be aware of this.

If we are going to be able to meet our greenhouse gas emission targets through Kyoto or beyond Kyoto, then nuclear power will be a part of that. What is also interesting to know is that the cost to actually manufacture power and through the life span of a nuclear reactor, the costs are equivalent to other alternative forms of energy, such as wind, solar and hydro power. That is important to be aware of because those who choose to demonize nuclear power need to be aware of this.

The other aspect of excellence that we have in our country is in the production of nuclear isotopes that are used in the medical field, and I think it is important for us to know that we as a country produce more than 50% of the medical isotopes in the world.

When the situation occurred not so long ago, with the minister making some grave errors at the end of last year in dealing with the nuclear isotope catastrophe that we had and the shutdown of our nuclear reactor in Chalk River, it bespoke of the fact that we lacked a redundancy in the system. As a physician, I frankly did not know that we did not have a redundancy in our system, so in that time of crisis we were trying to get isotopes from places like South Africa, which produces them too.

In the face of this, we had the production of the MAPLE reactor, but we have learned in the last 24 to 48 hours that the MAPLE reactor is now not going to open up.

● (1655)

What this means for Canadian patients and for those doctors who work in the care and in the diagnosis of patients who are ill is that we do not have the redundancy we need in acquiring the isotopes that are absolutely essential for the more than 60,000 procedures that occur every single day in the care of those who are ill in our country.

I would submit to the government that it has to come to the House and tell the House and the Canadian public what it is doing to ensure that we have redundancy in the production of radioactive isotopes in our country. If it does not do that, and if we have another problem with this 50 year old reactor at Chalk River, I might add, then Canadian patients will be left out on a limb.

Few things are more frightening for patients than to have to get these tests but more frightening to them is to be let down at the last minute that they cannot have the tests because they do not have access to these nuclear materials. It is heartbreaking for the patient. It is heartbreaking for the person's caregiver.

We know MDS Nordion supplies over half of the world's isotopes for the diagnostics and treatment of some very serious illnesses including numerous cancers. It is also used in the diagnosis of a number of diseases both malignancies and non-malignancies. We are also a leader in the development of gamma technology that is used for the elimination of food borne pathogens such as E. coli which can cause an array of problems.

I would only submit that it behooves the government to get on this right away. The Minister of Natural Resources must come to the House and tell the House and tell the Canadian public what he is doing to deal with this problem as quickly as possible.

On the energy security issue, I know that we will have to deal with a number of alternate forms of power including tidal power, wind power and hydro power. I want to draw to the attention of the government a really critical problem that is occurring right now in my province of British Columbia. It is going to wipe out the Similkameen Valley.

The Similkameen River that runs through the Similkameen Valley comes from south of the border. The United States has an option to build a high level dam on the river. That is going to back up the water and cause the destruction of the Similkameen Valley, destroy aboriginal lands owned by them, and destroy a park that is in the middle of that territory. In effect, the flooding of this area is going to wipe out the ability of a new park to occur in southern British Columbia.

What we have heard from the government on this is nothing. The people of the Similkameen Valley are deeply concerned about this, yet there are options. There are in fact three options. Option one is a high level dam that will result in the destruction of the valley, the destruction of aboriginal territories, the severing of a potential national park in half, the destruction of critical habitat, and the destruction of a number of species, flora and fauna that are significant and that are endangered and specific to the valley. The second option is to build a mid-level dam. The mid-level dam can be an option because it will not result in flooding. The third option is a low level dam that would be a run of the river dam.

*Government Orders*

The last two options, the mid-level dam and the small dam, are options that the government can negotiate with the United States to ensure that it has its power needs met, whereas we ensure that the integrity of the Similkameen Valley is going to continue. However, what is not an option is for the government to remain silent and not to bring this up with the U.S. government.

This requires the urgent attention of the Government of Canada. We have heard nothing on this whatsoever. I would like, as a British Columbia member of Parliament, to ask the government to come to the House as quickly as possible to inform the House and the Canadian public what the minister is going to do to address this particular problem.

It is grave, it is critical, and it requires the minister's and the government's utmost urgency, otherwise we are going to have a very big problem in British Columbia. It will be an environmental disaster, it will be a political disaster, and it will be an economic disaster.

The next issue concerns the oil sands. I know many of the members in the government come from the beautiful province of Alberta. The oil sands are in an area of some potential. They are in an area that is fraught with a lot of difficulty and could produce an environmental catastrophe.

• (1700)

The water issue alone is enough to make Albertans deeply concerned about this particular issue. That perhaps is why Alberta is looking toward the development of a nuclear reactor so it can get some of its energy needs from the reactor.

If the tar sands continue to go the way they are going the water security of the people of Alberta will be deeply damaged. Their ability to actually engage in farming and agriculture production that they have done so ably for so long will be compromised, and the beauty and environmental integrity of what I consider one of the most beautiful parts of the world will be damaged. This does not have to happen, but what it requires is a government that is willing to get off its backside and engage the private sector that wants the government to do it, to address the challenges within the tar sands.

If the government does not do that then the development of the tar sands without any consideration whatsoever for the environmental and larger economic concerns of other industries in Alberta will be a catastrophe for the people and province of Alberta as well as the people of Canada and for the world. The environmental damage that would be inflicted on the world and our country by that particular project would be so profound that it would damage the ability for us to get a hold of our greenhouse gas emissions in the future for a very long time to come.

This is not a given but it does require leadership and it does require the government working with the private sector. I want to emphasize that the oil producers in Alberta are smart people. They know the problems that they face and they would like to work with the government to resolve those problems. The people of Alberta know that and they want this to happen, too, but what they have received from some of their elected officials and from the government is dead silence. That is not an option.

Lastly, I want to address two other options. One is the issue of tidal power. Our country actually, interestingly enough, is a leader in this field. Many of the phenomenal scientists who have been involved in tidal power have actually exported their talents to other parts of the world such as Great Britain. Great Britain has overcome some of the initial scientific problems and obstructions that existed with tidal power. There were rusting problems, problems in terms of tidal movements being translated into the energy that is produced and also some security and consistency in the way that it is done. But those interestingly enough have actually been overcome, overcome I might add by Canadian scientists.

Now, our job is to bring those scientists and technologies back to Canada and to utilize tidal power. My riding of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca is on Vancouver Island. When I am back home on the island, all I see is potential energy that is going to waste and I ask myself, would it not be remarkable if we were able to harness the energy and utilize it, particularly in coastal areas?

It would be clean without any production of greenhouse gases. This could be one of the major exports that we could have, one of the things we could use within our own country to reduce our dependence on carbon-based fuels, but also it could be a phenomenal export potential for our country because many of the people of the world actually live in coastal areas.

One can imagine the potential that exists if we were able to capitalize and become world leaders in the area of tidal power. We are doing some of that in fact in my riding of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca. We have an area near Race Rocks but that kind of superb cutting edge science and research needs the attention of the federal government to ensure that we are able to maximize that potential, and utilize and export it to other countries.

The Liberal Party will be conditionally supporting the bill as it moves forward. Our critics will keep an eagle eye on it to make sure that it meets our demands in the interests of Canadians. If it continues to be a good bill, and answers our questions and those of our citizens, then we will support it through to the end.

• (1705)

**Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca talked quite a bit about the Alberta tar sands and how much greenhouse gases were being produced by the production there. He also mentioned how this was having a devastating impact on our climate and our greenhouse gas emissions.

One of the things we know is that the National Energy Board recently approved two more pipelines, the Alberta Clipper and the Southern Lights pipelines, that will take raw bitumen directly to refineries in the U.S.

Does the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca think that is a good idea for Canada? Once those pipelines are built they will increase production of the tar sands probably 10 or 20-fold, which will have an even more devastating impact on the climate.

*Government Orders*

The other thing we know is that the production there is having a serious effect on the climate and the water. We know that first nations in that area are very concerned about their health. Strange cancers are showing up in the first nations of that area and it is having a devastating impact on their communities. It is also the issue of jobs and the environment that are at risk.

I am curious to know if the member thinks that we should continue to increase production in the tar sands to this extent.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think this is an either/or situation. I think we have an option.

As I said in my speech, the unrestrained development of the tar sands does not suit the people of Alberta, the people of Canada nor the world on a number of levels, not only from an environmental perspective, such as the release of greenhouse gas emissions, damage to water supplies, pollution of water supplies and the diminution of water supplies, but it also releases cancer causing and teratogenic materials that are having an effect on people who live in the area.

What we need to do is ensure that if the tar sands go forward we address those concerns. We need to look at ways to pursue carbon dioxide sequestration. We need look at ways to ensure that carcinogenic and teratogenic materials that are produced as byproducts of the industrial production of the tar sands will not be released. We also need to ensure that the health and safety concerns of not only the people who live in the region but also the workers are addressed.

An exciting thing about it is that we do have options. An exciting thing is that the private sector, the companies that are involved in this, want the federal government to work with them. The people of Alberta want the federal government to work with them. What I think is so heartbreaking for the people of Alberta is that they are not seeing the leadership within their own province that would enable them to do that.

Albertans have a Prime Minister from their province but he has a tin ear to this particular issue. That is utterly irresponsible.

There are solutions and perhaps we can join with the member to implore the government and the Prime Minister to get on with it and deal with this issue because time is running out.

● (1710)

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last night we listened to four or five hours of overblown rhetoric by the Minister of Finance, apparently exercised about a carbon tax. He seemed to know more about the Liberal plan for greenhouse gas emissions than any other Liberal in the chamber, neglecting, of course, the fact that he already imposes a carbon tax of 10¢ a litre on every litre of gas that the people of Canada buy.

The inconsistencies of the finance minister were made obvious after about four hours when he did not realize that his own finance department had already priced carbon at \$65 a tonne. Even he, however, admitted, after about four hours of rhetoric, that carbon had to be priced.

Regardless of the finance minister's reluctance to deal with reality, I would ask the hon. member whether he sees a role for nuclear in

the whole exercise of trying to come to grips with the pricing of carbon and the issue of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not tell the public that the member's private member's bill on poverty reduction just received royal assent. That was a cooperative effort on both sides of the House, but the member was the lead because it is his bill and he deserves a lot of credit for completing that extraordinary effort.

One of the things I find really sad is how science and fact do not guide public policy very often. Canada has world-class scientists with extraordinary minds and I believe we need to tap into their ideas and solutions. I believe our role as members of Parliament is to tap into those great minds and study their ideas for the benefit of the public we serve. Extraordinary people living in our country have amazing ideas that should be brought to life, if even on a pilot project, that could benefit Canadians in many ways. I would implore the government to do a better job of utilizing our scientists.

It was a sad thing when the government closed the office of the science advisor and let Dr. Carty go. Why on earth would the government close the office of the science advisor to the Prime Minister, one of the stellar scientists in our country? It is unfathomable to me but the Prime Minister chose in his wisdom to do that.

Nuclear power can be a very potent tool. It is one of an array of non-greenhouse gas emitting tools that allows us to meet our energy needs, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, improve our environment and reduce our smog factor. It also affects the price of carbon. If we are going to be using carbon credits, the utilization of nuclear power, as with hydro, tidal and wind power, would enable us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, acquire a lot of carbon credits and keep the price of carbon down.

● (1715)

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's speech. He is not on the natural resources committee but his interest is keen and his base of knowledge is obviously very extensive.

I would like to ask him about solar energy. He talked about tidal power and unused or underutilized energy sources. Gleusdorf, Austria, with a population of 35,000, has as much installed solar energy capacity as all of Canada with our 33 million people.

I would like to ask the member if he shares my disappointment that to date the Conservative government has not yet seen fit to even incrementally wean us off our reliance on oil and gas and move toward renewables like solar, wind and tidal?

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has been a leader on this issue, not only for his constituents but here in the House. I thank him for mentioning one area that I was remiss in not mentioning and that is the issue of solar power.

*Government Orders*

The member is absolutely right. We did a lot of things to enable people to acquire other alternative options in terms of energy. He is absolutely right in terms of the use of solar. A very large chunk of Japan's energy source comes from solar. It is interesting to note that in Germany and in Japan they are constructing buildings that use 70% less energy than the equivalent buildings that we build in North America.

There are a lot of options and ideas out there. We just need to get on with it and employ those ideas for our country and our citizens.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, once again I rise to speak to Bill C-5, the nuclear liability act. It is an act that has been rattling around the House of Commons for the better part of a year and, in that year, our position has not really altered all that much on the bill.

Yes, we recognize the need to increase the liability limits for nuclear power, very much so. We know that the liability limit that was in place before is simply not enough. However, the \$650 million is a number that we have not been able to accept as a limit to the liability within the system and we have talked about that to a great degree.

I will not get into that right now because it is only part of the bill. We put forward many amendments on numerous other subjects, which I will get into as I go along, but they show that this bill, in reality, limits liability in more than one way. It limits liability and continues a Canadian practice of ignoring the impacts of nuclear accidents in the country, the impacts on workers in the uranium mining industry over many years and the impacts on our soldiers when they were put in harm's way in the face of nuclear explosions in the 1950s and 1960s.

There has been a consistent pattern over many years of downplaying the impacts of nuclear problems in the country. At the same time, contrary to what many of my colleagues have said, the nuclear industry is one that has never really made its way. In the half century that it has been a big part of the energy system in Canada, it has relied consistently on subsidies from government. It is an industry that has been plagued with overruns. We see this once again with the cancellation of the MAPLE reactor, a simple, small nuclear reactor going in place way over budget, to the point where we have now given up on it.

In the nuclear industry we have in place right now, we are looking at massive retrofits to existing plants at huge costs that are continuing to escalate as we move along. When we think of the nuclear industry, we are not thinking of an industry that has a great track record of performance in providing cheap energy for people across this country, and that is a reality. Therefore, when we talk about setting up a nuclear liability act to put things on a level playing field, we should take that seriously and we should look at how we are doing it.

At the same time, we should look at our record of dealing with people who have been exposed to nuclear radiation in this country in the past and ask if we are doing enough in this bill to protect them. To that end, I will go through some of the amendments that we proposed within the bill, taking away from the liability amount and speaking to some other items.

We proposed a number of amendments, such as to clause 24 which talks about alternate financial security that companies can put up in place of insurance under this bill. Up to 50% can be provided in alternative financial security. Once again, it is in the hands of the minister to deem correct the conditions by which the security is put up. Therefore, the minister has a great deal of latitude to choose what the financial security is for the nuclear plant. It does not all have to be insurance. Fifty per cent can be alternative security.

What is wrong with that? If there is an accident, the victims need to wait for the liquidation of the financial security in order to get compensation. The government, which puts up 20% of the funds for compensation, is on the hook at the very beginning with the money that it puts forward to the people who are seeking compensation out of the system.

● (1720)

We have problems with that because it clearly takes away from the notion that we would get away from government supporting the industry and the industry would stand on its own two feet through the insurance companies.

Then we could go to subclause 30(1), which states:

An action or claim must be brought

(a) in the case of an action or a claim for loss of life,

(i) within three years after the day on which the person died...

It does not talk about the survivors. The wage earner dies in an industrial accident at a nuclear site and the survivors have three years to effect that claim. Is that fair to the survivors? Perhaps the industrial worker simply gets cancer 10 years after exposure to the accident in the plant and dies. Does that mean his survivors do not get compensation?

Subclause 30(2) states:

No action or claim may be brought

(a) in relation to bodily injury, after 30 years from the day on which occurred the nuclear incident to which the action or claim relates...

Thirty years is not enough. We see that with the soldiers who were exposed to the nuclear weapons in the fifties. They are coming back now today with claims, long after 30 years, because it has shown up in their system. Once again, this is limiting the liability and it is limiting the ability for compensation to be paid.

In any other case, it is after 10 years from the day on which the nuclear accident occurred. If it is not bodily injury, if it is contamination of a site, if it is the fact that someone uses contaminated material from a site to perhaps build another site somewhere, or to use it in the building of residences, which has been a very common occurrence right across the country, and I can point to Uranium City where that happened, the liability and the ability to be compensated for mistakes that have been made is gone after 10 years. Once again, it is the limitations.

Then we could go to clause 32. A person who started off suing the operator, but after a certain period of time had not seen action, would have to start all over again. People who are suffering from things which are very difficult to determine or may take years to determine, such as cancer or radiation sickness, will have great difficulty going through multiple processes to get fair compensation.

*Private Members' Business*

This clause would allow a nuclear operator to delay having to pay compensation by throwing legal roadblocks in place. Wait long enough and working Canadians will suffer and compensation for the people who look for it will be unavailable.

Once again, the bill creates a situation where the claimants are at a greater risk than the company.

Clause 34 states that the maximum amount paid may not exceed 20% of the difference between the totals set out and total amounts paid by the operators. Therefore, interim compensation for people who are previously ill can only amount perhaps to 20% of what they require to cover their compensated loss. Once again, this speaks to favouring the company over the people who may be involved in the claims.

We also had a lot of trouble with clause 47. The tribunal, which has been set up to review these things, may refuse to hear any claim referred to it if it considers them to be frivolous or vexatious. This is patently unfair under the rules of our courts. Federal courts can only reject an action if a person has persistently instituted vexatious proceedings or has conducted a proceeding in a vexatious manner and only with the consent of the Attorney General of Canada. A tribunal will simply be able to say to a victim looking for compensation that the claim is vexatious, that it does not have deal with it. Where is this serving Canadians when it comes to establishing compensation?

Once again, this is the part of the bill with which we have a great deal of difficulty. I guess my colleagues in the other parties seem to be quite comfortable with it.

• (1725)

Subsection 50(2) states:

The Tribunal may, in order to process claims expeditiously, establish classes of claims that may be determined by a claims officer without an oral hearing and designate as a claims officer anyone it considers qualified.

A claims officers circumvents accountability, creating an easy opportunity for the system to be corrupted. A claims officer is used when small amounts are contemplated. When a tribunal is created, it means the damage from a nuclear incident is massive on a scale that we could tie with Three Mile Island, or Windscale or something of that nature. Therefore, where does this sit for claims officers?

Subclause 63(1) states:

If a regulation made under paragraph 68(b) respecting *pro rata* payments or establishing maximum limits is amended, the Tribunal shall inform the Minister of any change to applicable reductions that is to the advantage of any claimant who was not fully compensated in accordance with the previous regulation.

These are simply weasel words. This is something that we could not support because it opens up too many opportunities for the situation to be misused.

Clause 65 talks about the fines that could be levied on somebody who did not achieve the proper liability insurance. Subclause 65(2) states:

No operator is to be found guilty of the offence if it is established that the operator exercised due diligence to prevent the commission of the offence.

In other words, if somebody tried to get insurance and did not get it, that would be okay. If a company were unable to get insurance, if the previous insurance company, which had agreed to the risks,

determined those risks were getting greater and chose not to reinsure with that company, it would be okay because it had tried.

That is not the kind of legislation we like to see. We want companies to have insurance, no exceptions. If they want to run their plant, they need to have all the paperwork in place. What is wrong with that, in a Canadian context?

I see we are pretty well finished now, so I will leave the rest for later. I am sure the debate will continue.

• (1730)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** I thank the hon. member for Western Arctic. When we return to the study of Bill C-5, there will be seven minutes left for the hon. member.

**Hon. Jay Hill (Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Pursuant to Standing Order 45(7), there is an agreement among the whips of the recognized parties to further defer the recorded division on concurrence in the third report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to 3 p.m. on Tuesday, June 3.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### CLIMATE CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed from May 12 consideration of Bill C-377, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on Bill C-377, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change. It is bill brought forward by the leader of the NDP, as a private member's bill. I congratulate the leader for his work and thank him for his continuing contribution to the debate about carbon pricing.

I especially want to thank him for keeping an open mind. I know he came out strongly against the notion of a carbon tax shift at first, but yesterday he came some way back in recognizing that a carbon tax shift would be considered an invaluable tool as we took on the challenge of bringing greenhouse gas emissions back down our country.

Why is a bill like this even necessary? We looked at some questions just last night in the committee of the whole that were directly related to this issue.

*Private Members' Business*

I asked the Minister of Finance directly, as did my colleague, the hon. member for Mississauga—Erindale, about the effects of energy prices on the forthcoming government cap and trade plan, its regulatory plan due for October. The minister appeared confused by the question, as he did for that matter for much of the evening. He could not give us an indication that he even knew he had a cap and trade plan. He did not know it would cost Canadians more at the pumps, more for natural gas, more for home heating and more every time they made a purchase, but this is indisputable.

Let me quote directly from the government's "Turning the Corner" plan. At page 14 of the so-called detailed report of the government, which let me assure Canadians is no detail, it says, "Our modelling suggests that Canadians can expect to bear real costs" under the government's plan. It goes on to say, "these costs will be most evident in the form of higher energy prices, particularly with respect to electricity and natural gas". I am not saying that. That is the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Finance and the government in their plan.

Here is the real irony. Today we had the Prime Minister in London flogging his plan in Europe. Last night the finance minister could not even answer basic questions about the design of the cap and trade system, for which he is responsible, about the economic analysis that underpins the price of carbon, for which he is responsible. Yet the Prime Minister is out vaunting to the world, in Europe, in London, Rome and Paris, that he has a plan that will take Canada so far in the future. It is quite remarkable. The minister could not even tell us the price of carbon today, much less what he anticipates it to be in the fall.

How can we have 2008-09 budget estimates and projections if the minister does not know what the price of carbon will be and what the distributive effects will be on energy prices in the Canadian economy? The minister could not answer that question. He was not asked once, not twice but four times by two separate members of Parliament.

We have the minister so busy pursuing the politics of fear, racing down around carbon pricing, that he has not bothered to do even his own homework about the plan for which he is responsible for delivering in six short months from now. He even had more difficulty explaining his ecotrust scheme. This is really rich. It is \$1.5 billion put into a trust with no strings, no conditions, no verification and no accountability at all.

When we were in government, there was the partnership fund. Under ecotrust, there is no agreement with the provinces. There is no verification. I asked if he could tell how he expected the \$1.5 billion to reduce a single tonne of greenhouse gases. Not only was he flustered, he did not even know what I was talking about. He is administering the \$1.5 billion fund, not his colleague, the Minister of the Environment. It is really unbelievable that we are trying to reconcile all of this and the Minister of Finance simply does not know what he is doing.

Let us turn back to the provisions of Bill C-377 and the amendments.

Motion No. 1 is simple. It identifies the GHGs we are talking about, as listed in the list of toxins under CEPA. Listing these

greenhouse gases was a Liberal government achievement in the last Parliament. Other amendments deal with the roles of the round table on the environment economy and the Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development.

• (1735)

I continue to manifest grave concern about the government's unilateral decision to change the reporting structure of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy out of the Privy Council Office and the Prime Minister's office and seriously weakening its reach and impact by putting it under the Minister of the Environment, particularly the current Minister of the Environment, but certainly the Department of the Environment.

I hesitate to support the mandate that is being called for by the leader of the NDP in his bill because the round table has been so seriously weakened. How did the Conservatives do this? They did it by subterfuge. They did it with the stroke of a pen. They cut the legs out from underneath the agency. The government does not even understand what Brian Mulroney understood when he set up the agency to report directly to his office.

It is about PMO control. It speaks volumes about the fact that the Conservatives really want to control the Ministry of the Environment. They want to weaken what happens with civil society actors who come together in a place like the national round table. What really happens is that the advice gets buried and marginalized.

It is very interesting, because last night we also asked the Minister of Finance to explain to us just what is happening with the cap and trade system that he is talking about and how, for example, it might connect with other trading systems. Wow. That was really quite remarkable, because the government has no idea how its own cap and trade system will affect energy prices. It has prepared nothing in this fiscal year for the distributive economic effects, increases in costs for home heating fuel, natural gas, oil, and increases in gas prices at the pump. Let the Conservatives stand and deny it.

On the one hand the Minister of the Environment says, "We are in favour of pricing carbon". On the other hand the Minister of Finance says, "I do not know what you are talking about. I cannot even tell you what the price of carbon will be. I have no idea what the price of carbon is today in the marketplace".

It is unbelievable that we are four months away from the Conservatives' so-called cap and trade plan, but it is worse again, because they do not know how it will connect with the emerging provincial regimes. Whether they are carbon taxes in B.C. or whether they are trading systems in Quebec, they do not know. This is worse, because they do not even know how their national cap and trade program will connect to the international cap and trade program coming from Europe and elsewhere for those countries that were still signatories to Kyoto, Canada having abandoned it.

Yet again, there is no evidence from the government that it knows what it is doing on cap and trade when it comes to an emerging potential American system under a president McCain, or a president Obama, or a president Clinton.

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It is really quite remarkable that the Conservatives do not know what they are doing; the left hand, the right hand. The irony cannot be lost on Canadians as the Prime Minister is over in London giving a grandiose speech about his climate change vision for Canada, and the plan, which nine independent groups in Canada, including such left leaning institutions as the C. D. Howe Institute, Deutsche Bank, CIBC World Markets and others have looked at and said, "It is not believable. There is no analysis. They will never achieve the greenhouse gas cuts they claim they will achieve".

How can they, when the Minister of Finance does not even know what the price of carbon will be in four months when he is going to set up the economics of a trading regime for this country? It is unbelievable for Canadians when they see that kind of incompetence, in fact, negligence. The minister was scrambling, looking for documents, turning to the deputy minister and the ADMs, who apparently knew even less. Yet we are four months away from the government claiming it is announcing a major regulatory system.

Worse, the politics of fear compels the government to try to deliberately mislead Canadians about the fact that when it brings out its plan, it will have a massive impact on energy costs: "Do not tell the people this. No, do not tip your hat. We are the tax fighters", the Conservatives say, "We are the tax cutters".

There is no surprise there again, because we now have in government the arrival of the Harris quintuplets: the prospective chief of staff to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of the Environment, and now the House leader; the five man wrecking crew who just about ruined the province of Ontario, leaving it with a \$28 billion increase in provincial debt and a \$5.6 billion deficit.

Canadians should be very concerned indeed about the fact that the government does not have a climate change plan.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-377, which relates to climate change. As you know, my party, the Bloc Québécois, has been one of the strongest proponents of the Kyoto protocol since it was signed in 1997. It is the only party that has consistently called on the federal government to come up with a plan that meets the climate change targets.

I come from a region of wide open spaces, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, where the environmental problems of air pollution are less visible than smog is in a densely populated city. However, I wanted to take part in this debate, because environmental problems are not always visible in our everyday lives, even though they have serious consequences.

The specific consequences of global warming are becoming increasingly tangible, and we must take urgent action before we reach the point of no return. Every day brings more information about the serious long-term risks and the implications for future generations. People in my riding, Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, and throughout Quebec and Canada are concerned about the effects of global warming.

The long-term implications are so obvious that paragraph 5(a) of the bill sets out a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to a level 80% below the 1990 level. This reduction of greenhouse gas emissions generated by human activity in Quebec and Canada would have to be made by 2050. By 2020, one quarter of emissions would have to be literally eliminated.

These targets, which were included in Bill C-377 in accordance with the opinion of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, finally give weight to Canada's commitment. The government, which in recent years has unfortunately abandoned its role as an environmental leader, will be able to restore its image.

This bill also proposes that a report be made to the House of Commons on progress in the fight against climate change. Bill C-377 provides for five-year interim plans and annual reports. These requirements, set out in clauses 6 and 10, create accountability for targets and results. Moreover, they provide a way of clearly informing the public about developments.

That is the way to make a serious plan for public policy implementation. Neither the previous government nor the current one had these elements in place to bring in concrete actions in response to the commitments made. When we sign a protocol, we must honour our word.

The government must learn from its mistakes in failing to adhere to phase I of the Kyoto protocol. The two target-oriented measures make this bill a credible plan. The Bloc Québécois has supported the member for Toronto—Danforth's initiative since first reading. Now, following debates in committee and the resulting proposed amendments, we support Bill C-377.

It goes without saying that the Bloc Québécois played a positive, active role in the committee in order to improve certain provisions in the bill. The main issues were the measurements and the application of the plan. I shall explain.

The concept of equity is integral to the Kyoto protocol: equity between developing and industrialized countries, as well as equity between Quebec and the other provinces.

• (1745)

In the past, Quebecers invested in hydroelectric resources and the results of that are clear: lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Here is an example that speaks volumes: my region, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, is a major aluminum producer. Aluminum is a primary metal, and the industry is an economic engine that has undergone restructuring several times in the past 20 years. Companies have invested a lot in research and development. They doubled their aluminum production between 1990 and 2005: 1.3 million tonnes in 1990 and twice that in 2005. One might think that emissions doubled as well. But they did not. In fact, greenhouse gas emissions dropped by 500,000 tonnes. As a result, in 2006, emissions were 15% lower.

Aluminum producers in Quebec did not stop there. In June 2007, together with the Government of Quebec, they committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by an additional 150,000 tonnes between 2008 and 2011.

The Bloc Québécois has consistently asked that a territorial approach be included in any plan to address global warming. This has been an important objective for the Bloc Québécois and it is now included in the amendments proposed in clause 7:

—each province may take any measure that it considers appropriate to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

Thus, every effort will be based on specific targets with the objective of:

—limiting the amount of greenhouse gases that may be released in each province by applying to each province the commitment made under section 5 and the interim Canadian greenhouse gas emission targets referred to in section 6—

In short, each province will be able to enforce measures appropriate to its industries. We believe that all the amendments fit perfectly into the spirit of Bill C-377 while also taking the international context into account. It will be possible to adjust targets, based on future negotiations carried out in the context of the United Nations convention on climate change.

The Bloc Québécois' position has always been clear: rather than continuing its efforts to undermine the Kyoto protocol, the Conservative government must take immediate political action—and this is the only responsible action—and adopt a plan with specific targets.

Quebec is already on board with the Kyoto protocol and has implemented measures. The Quebec government's plan has been commended repeatedly around the globe. Of course, there is still room for improvement, but Quebecers should not have to pay the price for the Conservative government's ideologies.

In closing, I would remind the House that this issue goes beyond partisan politics. It is of great concern to the citizens of my riding and my region, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, and is bringing them together. It is gathering support from people of all ages, since it will be at the very heart of the lives of future generations.

The Bloc Québécois is in favour of Bill C-377 in principle and it will be our pleasure to support it.

● (1750)

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** I would like to thank the hon. member for Victoria for keeping order and decorum in the House during the past several minutes. The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona would certainly be proud.

At this moment, I give the floor to the hon. member for Western Arctic.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak to Bill C-377, a bill that would help Canada and would make Canada assume its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change gas emissions.

Over the last day and a half, I had the opportunity to travel to Greenland on the issue of northern sovereignty. While I was there with the Minister of Natural Resources, I had the opportunity to

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travel to the Greenland ice cap, which is an amazing place. It is a huge expanse of ice that has been in place for hundreds of thousands of years. There is an enormous volume of moisture tied up in the ice cap, but it is quite clearly under severe strain right now.

The scientists we met with on the ice cap talked to us about the conditions they are seeing within this massive and seemingly eternal landscape of ice that is thousands of metres thick and is covering a whole continent. However, right now it is moving. The movement within the ice is accelerating.

The rate of loss of the ice cap is accelerating as well. It accelerated over the past decade to a point where it had between 250 and 300 cubic kilometres of ice loss each year. Last season, it achieved 500 cubic kilometres of ice loss. That is a massive increase.

Any discussion of northern sovereignty, of course, links to climate change. We had the opportunity to hear presentations on climate change from very respected climatologists in large research institutions. They said that the situation right now with the Arctic ice is likely to mean that if we have another warm summer this year, they will be able to sail a boat across the North Pole, from Norway through to Russia.

That is an extraordinary statement. It may not come to pass. We may have a cooler summer. However, the direction that our climate is taking is extremely disturbing. We must recognize that. As Canadians, we have a tremendous responsibility to lead ourselves and the rest of the world toward solutions, toward mitigation as well as reducing our impact.

This bill sets out the kinds of goals that are required to achieve what the scientists have said is a sufficient reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for the world by 2050. Setting out the goals for Canada to achieve those things is extremely important. It is part of what we have to do here.

I am dedicated to this. I will dedicate the rest of my life to working to achieve the kinds of things we have to do in Canada to preserve our life and the chance for our children and grandchildren to continue to prosper. That is certainly a worthwhile goal and I have total faith that this country can do that. It can move ahead in a fashion that can achieve our goals in this way. I do not see why we cannot.

I had an opportunity to talk to the Danes. I like the Danes. The Danish minister of energy said to me last year that if we want to accomplish something on climate change and energy, we need to build a non-political consensus within our Parliament of the directions we have to take. That is so important.

● (1755)

The relentless sniping over climate change that we have seen in this last two years really does not accomplish all that much. However, we did accomplish one thing on climate change already. When we sent the clean air act to a special committee, we got a majority in Parliament to agree on the directions we should take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We got a majority in Parliament to agree to the mechanisms that we should use to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

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What I heard from the members of the other party who did not quite agree with us at the time is that they were pretty well on side with most of those mechanisms anyhow. We said in the clean air act that we wanted to put a cap on emissions, put a price on carbon, and create a massive retrofit program for this country so the first step we would take would be to reduce people's use of energy. We would see rapid and substantial decreases in greenhouse gas emissions. We would have a mechanism to fund this and these things would come to pass.

We did that work. The bill is sitting there, waiting to come back to Parliament, waiting to spring into life and to provide that direction to this country. We have done that work and we need to see that kind of plan in place.

Sometimes we find that other parties change in regard to that. They start to talk about other ideas like they are picking fruit from a tree. Here is a different fruit, they say, let us try that one. What really is required is a consensus on action. We worked on that for a long time.

I would say to the Liberal Party members that they should remember what they worked on in this Parliament. They should remember the effort they put into this, the good ideas they put forward and that we supported, and the good ideas that they have accepted from us. When they move forward with anything on this issue, they should remember that.

We need consensus and we need to build from consensus in the government and in this country to accomplish these rather difficult paths that we have ahead of us. However, if we accomplish them, we will do a major and wonderful thing for the world, for our own society and for our children and grandchildren.

Bill C-377 is setting out the goals. It is giving us a framework with which to analyze the goals and make sure that we are on track. It is a planning document of the first order. It is an opportunity to layer in the mechanisms, to understand how they work and to ensure they are meeting the targets as we move along.

Why would we not have a process like this, a process that will take the politics out of it and will mean that we can move ahead very carefully?

I appreciate your gesture, Mr. Speaker. As always in the House, the work that the Speakers do to keep us on track is great. I also appreciate the fact, Mr. Speaker, that you shared that green chair with one of my colleagues, who I am sure will always relish the memory of that opportunity.

To get back to the subject at hand, how can we continue to work on this together? We can continue by passing this legislation. The bill is a planning document. It allows us all to agree on the process that we will follow. It is a document that gives us the flexibility to look at how we are making decisions and to ensure that those decisions are moving us in the right direction. By its nature, it is a non-partisan document.

If we all support this, we can move ahead. We can make a difference in this country. We can make this Parliament sing a different tune. We can say, "Here is the reality of what we are dealing with in this world and in this country, so let us make it work

together". Let us make a better place for all of us. Let us put aside the politics on this particular issue for a second, a day, a week, a month, a year, and let us move ahead with this for the good of Canadians.

• (1800)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment now has the floor. I thank him for his patience.

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak on Bill C-377, the NDP's so-called climate change bill. It is actually a very poorly written bill and is the first bill I have seen in years that did not make it through committee.

During the report stage of Bill C-377, we were reminded of the 13 long, dark years of Liberal neglect on the environment, a time when emissions continued to rise every year and the Liberals did absolutely nothing on the environment. Those were dark years.

We also heard again and again about the NDP's dismal record on the environment, and how they say they care about the environment through carefully crafted media announcements, yet regularly vote against cleaning up and protecting the environment. The fact is that the NDP has been an absolute failure when it comes to the environment.

The previous Liberal government, with much fanfare, committed Canada to a formal target under the Kyoto protocol, but as we later discovered through comments from the former Liberal environment ministers and a senior Liberal adviser, the previous Liberal government had no plan and no intention of ever achieving the ambitious targets set out by the Kyoto protocol agreement.

The end result was 33% above the commitment that Canada made under the previous Liberal government.

**An hon. member:** Shame.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** The member is absolutely right: it was a shame on Canada internationally.

Our government believes in being honest with Canadians as well as our international partners. That is why we introduced the "Turning the Corner" plan, an environmental action plan that not only is realistic and achievable but will maintain Canada's economic competitiveness. We need greenhouse gas targets that are technically achievable and at an acceptable cost. That is what is found in the government's turning the corner action plan. Unlike Bill C-377, which was not costed, our plan was costed.

Before setting any targets, we need to know the economic impacts. As I mentioned, Bill C-377 has not been costed by the NDP despite repeated calls for that analysis to be undertaken. What is the NDP trying to hide from Canadians?

Does the NDP not believe that Canadians have the right to know what the bill, if adopted, would mean to the Canadian economy? Do Canadians not have the right to know what sectors of the economy will be impacted by the legislation and how badly they will be impacted?

Does the NDP not believe that Canadians have the right to know whose jobs will be lost as a result of the bill? Yes, Canadians do have that right. Do Canadians not have a right to know the price of gasoline if Bill C-377 were to go forward? As we have heard, we are looking at another \$1.50 a litre on top of what Canadians are paying now.

I want to read for members what the former commissioner of the environment said in critiquing the former Liberal government:

We expected that the federal Liberal government would have conducted economic, social, environmental, and risk analyses in support of its decision to sign the Kyoto Protocol in 1998...we found that little economic analysis was completed, and the [former Liberal] government was unable to provide evidence of detailed social, environmental, or risk analyses.

That is exactly what the NDP is attempting to do here.

Every witness group that was heard at the environment committee, including the leader of the NDP, said the bill should be costed, yet the NDP is moving forward without it being costed, I believe because they are ashamed of the costs for jobs and to heat our homes and the cost of energy. When we include that with what the Liberals are proposing with their carbon tax, we can imagine what would happen to the cost of energy in Canada. I would like to contrast the NDP plan and its approach with that taken by the government.

●(1805)

In setting our greenhouse gas targets, the Government of Canada is not only looking at targets but it is looking at the best way to achieve them. The government is taking into account what impact those targets would have on all sectors of the economy, for every sector will be expected to do its part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Any discussion about Bill C-377 has to be taken in relation to the so-called plan issued yesterday on carbon pricing by the leader of the NDP. Actually, it was nothing more than another one of those empty NDP media events.

I have to ask my friends in the NDP: Where have they been for the last two years?

Instead of talking about putting a price on carbon, our government has already shown leadership on the environment and delivered a balanced solution to tackle climate change with our "Turning the Corner" environmental plan, which includes, for the first time in Canadian history, a price on carbon.

As members know, our "Turning the Corner" plan to cut Canada's greenhouse gas emissions by an absolute 20% by 2020 will see the market set a price on carbon starting at around \$25 a tonne and rising to \$65 a tonne. That plan can be seen online.

In addition, our government's plan has brought certainty to the carbon market, and that is important. The Montreal Exchange has said that our March "Turning the Corner" announcement has given it the green light to start trading as early as tomorrow, May 30.

The NDP leader actually bragged yesterday that the NDP raised the issue of climate change back in 1983, yet greenhouse gas emissions have skyrocketed since then. I guess he has actually been celebrating 25 years of NDP failure on the environment. The fact is

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if we look at the track record of the NDP, it has been an absolute failure on the environment. Those members have done absolutely nothing. Ultimately, that is the problem with the NDP. Those members can talk all they want, but the fact is they have never actually done anything to protect the environment.

The fact is while the opposition parties squabble and try to make themselves look the greenest, the Prime Minister is showing real leadership this week on the world stage by meeting with international leaders from across Europe and around the world. The Prime Minister is demonstrating that Canada is taking real action in the fight against climate change, both here at home and abroad. We received an award yesterday from the United Nations on our accomplishments on biodiversity. That is the kind of leadership that Canadians can count on with this government to deliver every day.

I could go on and on about other issues, such as the fact that the opposition tried to completely rewrite Bill C-377. As I said at the beginning, it could not even be completed and had to be sent back here unamended completely.

There are serious legal issues over Bill C-377 that should be of concern to Canadians. Peter Hogg, a respected constitutional scholar, told the committee that:

Such regulations could reach into every area of Canadian economic (and even social) life...Such a sweeping grant of authority to the executive is unprecedented outside of wartime—and should be a matter of grave political concern—

He went on to say:

If Parliament were to enact the Bill, it would be struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Another structural deficiency in the bill is the proposed penalties and fines. Bill C-377 includes only a very rudimentary set of offences and penalties, neither complemented by a statutory enforcement regime. That is why this government is proceeding instead with mandatory regulations under the existing Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which contains a strong penalty regime for polluters. Unlike the opposition, this party and this government will not play partisan politics with the environment.

We will continue to oppose Bill C-377 and continue to move forward with the implementation of our "Turning the Corner" action plan, an environmental plan that will finally result in a clear reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution for the benefit of Canadians and the international community, both for this generation and for coming generations. We care about the environment. We are getting the job done.

●(1810)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-377, which ensures that Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing climate change. This bill is even more important because it does not put a partisan spin on this issue, an issue that is probably the greatest challenge of the 21st century. Canadians expect us to be above partisan games.

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Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I was very honoured that you asked me to replace you for a few minutes. I had the opportunity, while sitting in the green chair, to look at things from a different perspective. I spent a few minutes thinking about how important it would be for the government to show true leadership on this issue that is so important for the future.

I recently attended a conference in Victoria.

[*English*]

The conference, called “Gaining Ground”, was held in Victoria during the break week. There were people gathered from all over B.C. and indeed from all over Canada and even from the United States. There were students, scientists, economists, and business people.

The students, the young people, said, “Do not mortgage our future”. The economists were saying, “Do not treat environmental impacts as externalities, as we have been doing and as we continue to do”.

Business leaders are far ahead of where we are at the moment. There were builders there who talked about the incredible impact that we could have by simply having some leadership at the level of changing the rules around construction in Canada and beginning to build green buildings, green homes, the kinds of green economy jobs that we could be creating, but that has not happened yet.

This bill would allow us to work together to build consensus. This bill is really science-based and I would like to go back to that. However, I want to talk a little about the consensus that I think the New Democrats have tried to build on during this Parliament, given how strongly we feel about this issue and how important we believe it is.

There was the Liberal Bill C-288, the Kyoto bill, and we agreed to work with the Liberals to bring that bill through committee to the House and to pass it. It was the same thing with Bill C-30, the Conservatives' climate change bill, which in its initial stages would have done very little to mitigate climate changes, but we proposed that all parties bring their best ideas and work together in consensus at committee.

We did that and there were some great ideas that came from all parties and this bill remains at third reading. The government has refused to bring it to the House for a vote and that simply goes against what Canadians expect of us. They want real change.

As everyone tries to understand the shifts that are required to achieve a more sustainable future, they are discouraged by the lack of action by successive governments. We know that biophysical and social changes can reach a tipping point, beyond which there is potentially irreparable change.

My colleague from Western Arctic spoke about his visit recently to Greenland and observed with scientists the way glaciers are receding. I had the fortunate experience to do the same thing on the other coast. I had the opportunity to visit Prince William Sound and the glacier called Nellie Juan. The people who were with us, who had been living in that area for some 30 years, showed us the way the ice was receding. There were beginnings of growth of vegetation where the ice had stood for centuries.

That is our children's future and our grandchildren's future that we are looking at. This is why I take this issue so seriously, as I think do all Canadians. The reason this bill is so exciting is it sets firmly into law the responsibility Canada must assume to prevent the tipping point that I mentioned.

• (1815)

Setting targets into law is key. Before I ran for election I remember having a conversation with the former minister of the environment. He was discouraged by the lack of action and the lack of commitment of his own government to move forward on climate change after accepting the Kyoto agreement.

I got the impression that the reason he felt there was a lack of commitment was that the discussions always occurred behind closed doors in cabinet and there was no formal legislation requiring government to take action. It was always discussions behind closed doors and power plays that prevented any real decisions to take action. This piece of legislation would change that process.

Scientists tell us there is a consensus that an increase of 2° in the world's surface temperature from pre-industrial levels would constitute dangerous climate change and trigger global scale impacts and feedback loops from which it is difficult to imagine coming back.

Dr. Andrew Weaver, a leading scientist, Nobel prize winner, a professor at the University of Victoria, and a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, spoke to the committee. Here is what he said:

What I can say is that any stabilization of greenhouse gases at any level requires global emissions to go to zero.

I had to reread that because it is difficult to imagine how we can get there. Dr. Weaver is one of the leading world experts and certainly is a well-respected Canadian scientist. He said:

There is no other option. To stabilize the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at any concentration that is relevant to human existence on the planet, we must go to zero emissions.

Hence the importance of this bill, because it will set into law the targets and the timelines that science tells us we must meet if we want to stop irreversible damage: medium targets of 25% below 1990 levels and long term targets of 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

The Conservatives have set a new starting date and we know from all the comments we have heard that their targets simply do not get the job done as they would like to tell us they do. Science tells us that if we follow the government's plan we are going to—

• (1820)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It is with regret that I must interrupt the hon. member for Victoria.

*Private Members' Business*

The hon. member for Northumberland—Quinte West has the floor with the understanding that I will cut off debate in nine minutes.

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to add to the debate on Bill C-377 at report stage .

The Conservative Party members on the environment committee, which studied the bill, have some serious concerns about the legality and constitutional status of this bill. I know that the Conservative members were, and are, extremely concerned regarding the lack of any economic analysis or costing of the bill, its constitutional validity and the manner in which the bill was reported back to the House. Bill C-377 is an irresponsible piece of legislation.

What the NDP is proposing would require a 40% reduction in greenhouse emissions from where we are today. Much like the Liberals' hidden carbon tax plan, this simply is not possible without causing massive job losses and huge price increases in electricity, heat and gasoline. The costs that this bill would impose on Canadian families and businesses could be quite considerable. Yet, when he testified at the committee about the bill, the leader of the NDP actually admitted that he had not bothered to find out how much the bill would cost Canadian families in increased gas and energy prices.

One would think for a member who stands in this House almost every day and rails on and on about gas prices, he would have taken the time to step back and get a fair costing of what he was proposing.

Costs alone should not be the only reason to defeat this bill. Earlier, I believe that one of my colleagues addressed comments made by the respected constitutional scholar Peter Hogg at the environment committee in early February. I know he made reference to his comments that this bill would likely be struck down by the Supreme Court. What he did not mention was another comment made by Mr. Hogg. He said, "the constitutional issues are all that I am concerned with, and they are, in my view, enough to defeat the legislation". Wise words from a wise man. I believe that Mr. Hogg's comments should be heeded by all members of this House.

Unfortunately, all the NDP members care about is passing feel good pieces of legislation that will not accomplish what they want them to accomplish.

It is not just the cost and the constitutionality of the bill that are in question, but it is also the issue of regulatory targets. I think we all agree in this House that regulatory targets like those being proposed in Bill C-377 should be evaluated carefully and logically. For example, we all know that the previous Liberal government set arbitrary targets on greenhouse gas emissions at Kyoto under pressure from former Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and then stood back and did nothing for 10 long years.

That brings me to a comment made by a witness at the environment committee earlier this spring.

Andre Turmel from the Canadian Bar Association appeared as a witness. One of the things that he said which I found most interesting is that targets "should be linked to and coherent with targets set out in existing international law.... The targets in Bill C-377 are not". That is a very interesting comment. The targets in Bill C-377 are incoherent with those set out in international law.

Either the NDP research bureau did not bother doing any homework or the NDP leader is more interested in scoring political points than fighting climate change. In either case, this is not responsible behaviour.

In conclusion, the question that this House is facing today with this bill is: Should we set climate change objectives that we know from the very beginning make little or no sense; objectives that would be impossible to meet without considerably disrupting the Canadian economy? Or should we set realistic and achievable targets that would strengthen Canada's long term competitiveness; targets that would still represent significant and positive progress in the fight to reduce harmful air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions?

I know that the Conservative members agree with the latter position. That is why we cannot support this bill. Quite frankly, this bill is comparable to a foot on the throat of the automotive industry. Thousands of jobs in my area, in the area surrounding the Durham region, Northumberland and Peterborough, are reliant upon a healthy and vibrant automotive industry, yet we have seen some job losses. We have seen two shifts laid off at the General Motors truck plant.

• (1825)

This legislation will just add to the problems of the automotive industry, an automotive industry that the NDP claims to support and yet at that committee, I am told that the automotive industry said that this will be tantamount to almost obliterating automotive plants and parts assembly plants across the province and the country. That is unacceptable. That is why we will not support the bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Resuming debate. The hon. member for Essex. He should know that in three minutes he will be interrupted by the Chair.

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** In three minutes, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise in the debate on Bill C-377, standing in the name of the leader of the New Democratic Party. This is a bill that we fought tooth and nail at committee, every step of the way because it is a bad bill for Canada.

It is a very bad bill. We already heard from previous members of our party about how it was not costed. What are the costs? We had a chance to probe that at committee, to ask witnesses. We asked an economist what the cost of it would be. Even in his spotty analysis he predicted there would be dire consequences for certain sectors, among them the auto industry.

*Private Members' Business*

What was the proposed solution from the New Democrats? Billions of dollars for some sort of transition fund to create a job, hopefully somewhere down the road. However, they were prepared to put the auto industry out of business right now, moves that Buzz Hargrove himself even said would be suicidal for the economy. It would mean that every car in Canada, except the Impala, could not be produced here. What does that mean for communities like Oshawa, Windsor, Oakville and on and on down the list? That means they are out of jobs; the industry is done here.

The reality is that the NDP members do not care. They can stand in the House and say that they are there for the working family, but they are prepared to put a bill forward that even the economists say is going to pose a real problem for jobs that exist today. There is no plan for the future.

• (1830)

**Ms. Catherine Bell:** We need green jobs. We know that.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** They say green jobs. Mr. Speaker, if there is not a green job for three, four or five years down the road, that is cold comfort for someone who is out of a job today and is trying to pay his family's bills. That is what the NDP calls standing up for working families.

No, we have taken a balanced approach. We have our turning the corner plan. It is tough on the environment and on the polluters but in a way that is reasonable for them to make a transition to the green economy. That is what this government is trying to do.

What else do the NDP members want to do in the post-Kyoto period? They want to give China a 20 year pass on emissions so that manufacturers there can manufacture a car cheaper than can our own domestic industries. That is what they want to do. They want to put the boots to the industry. They want to say it is over for them.

We have taken the right approach to this one. The witnesses at the committee gave testimony that supports the things we are trying to do, not this kind of nonsense. It is an unconstitutional bill. It is not costed. It would put the auto industry specifically out of jobs. That is an irresponsible approach. That is why we are going to continue to fight this bill. When it comes up for a vote, we are going to vote against it. We are going to do the responsible thing for working families and the environment in this country.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It being 6:31 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired. Accordingly, the question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** In my opinion, the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The recorded division on Motion No. 1 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 2.

[*English*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** A recorded division on Motion No. 2 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 3.

[*Translation*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** In my opinion, the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 4.

[*English*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

[English]

Normally at this time the House would proceed with the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at the report stage of the bill. However, pursuant to Standing Order 98 the divisions stand deferred until Wednesday, June 4, 2008, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[Translation]

### MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on April 4, I asked the Minister of the Environment about his appearance before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. The Minister of the Environment sidestepped the questions.

I will review the facts. In the fall of 2006, a municipal election was held in Ottawa. The stakes were very high, in particular the light rail project. Members will remember that the municipal council negotiated and approved a contract with Siemens to carry out the project. The council then made a request for \$200 million in funding from the Government of Canada.

At the time, the current Minister of the Environment was President of the Treasury Board. It was public knowledge that the President of the Treasury Board did not get along with the then-mayor of Ottawa, Bob Chiarelli. However, a mayoral candidate, the current mayor of Ottawa, Larry O'Brien, seemed to hit it off with the Conservative minister. The two allegedly conspired to offer a job to a third candidate to remove him from the mayoral race.

It could not be more clear: by interfering with the subsidy for the light rail project, the President of the Treasury Board was interfering in the mayoral race. What did he do? He got a copy of the contract and found a weakness. He said he had hit the jackpot. He attacked the reputation of several municipal officials, claiming that these City of Ottawa officials had lied to him.

• (1835)

In his eyes, the light rail project was a fiasco. Why then did federal officials approve the project? Why was the Department of Transport, with its expertise, not called in to advise the Treasury Board president? Why did he not consult his own officials, who had already approved the project? There were many projects on the drawing board, but the light rail project was the only one to get the president's personal attention.

After the election, the new Ottawa municipal council decided to cancel the light rail project. Because of the minister's stubbornness and poor judgment, the City of Ottawa is still waiting for light rail and could be forced to pay hundreds of millions of dollars for breach of contract.

During his testimony at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, the Minister of the Environment stated that the Treasury Board had met on October 10, 2006, in the cabinet room to approve his light rail decision. But that was a break week. Government files and media reports confirmed that members of the Treasury Board were not in the city on that day. Instead of clarifying the situation, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons accused the media of reporting false information. Instead of simply telling the truth or correcting the facts, the minister blamed the media.

The government has had almost two months to respond clearly and act transparently on this issue. I would like to repeat my question from April 4: on what date was this meeting held and which cabinet members were present?

[English]

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Hull—Aylmer has actually managed something quite incredible. In such a short amount of time he has put out so much false information it is very difficult to actually respond.

First but not least of which is the fact that he just cited a meeting of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates and what was said there and what happened there. The member was not even there. He is not a member of the committee. He does not know what happened in the committee. He was not there for the testimony. He was not there for the questioning. He was not there for any of the information that he is now splicing and dicing, and trying to put forward as some kind of an explanation for something that in fact did not at all happen.

This is not unusual. It is not original. We know that the Liberals have been putting forward, led by the member for Ajax—Pickering, a bunch of falsehoods on this file. The other day the member for Ajax—Pickering, in fact, said:

I am worried that politics is being boiled down to irrelevance—to splashy conflicts—

Yet, he gets up in the House day after day and all the time under the cover of parliamentary privilege and immunity and takes some of the most outrageous shots and smears at staffers of cabinet ministers and cabinet ministers themselves.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The fact of the matter is, and this is the central fact that I would ask my hon. colleague from Hull to understand. The central fact is that Treasury Board, under the current Minister of the Environment, the member for Ottawa West—Nepean, approved funding for the light rail project, but it was the democratically elected Ottawa City Council that voted against the light rail contract. Treasury Board approved the money and it was the city council, elected by the people of Ottawa, that voted against the light rail contract.

As for the contract the member opposite knows that it was five former Liberal party candidates who voted against the previous light rail project at the Ottawa City Council.

I want to return for a second to the member for Ajax—Pickering who has led the charge on this issue. He filed a frivolous complaint on this subject with the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services. What did it do? It threw his complaint out completely. It threw it out. It was so frivolous that it would not even listen to him.

As a matter of fact, OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino was interviewed on CFRA radio about this very same issue earlier this week. He confirmed that the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services had completely dismissed baseless complaints from the Liberal member for Ajax—Pickering. He also said that it was interesting that the member for Ajax—Pickering was making these complaints because that very own member's office was calling up the OPP on several occasions.

It gets better. Commissioner Julian Fantino said what he thought of these Liberal claims. He called them “ludicrous, frivolous, vexatious” and an “attempt to interfere with due process”. He also said the following about the accusations by that Liberal member. He said, “I don't know how anybody other than those of feeble mind could ever jump to these conclusions. Absolutely it's preposterous”.

The only thing left to do on this subject, other than leave it behind as a non-scandal, another one of these Liberal non-scandals where they throw mud and try to make something after the fact, is for the members of the Liberal Party, the member for Ajax—Pickering and unfortunately now my friend from Hull—Aylmer, to withdraw these ridiculous attacks, recognize that what they have alleged here is entirely wrong, and that what happened here was the appropriate due course of action.

Again, as I said, Treasury Board approved the money. The democratically elected council of the City of Ottawa voted it down. It took the action on behalf of its constituents and the City of Ottawa does not need the member of Parliament from Hull getting in its face and telling it what it did democratically was inappropriate.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Mr. Speaker, before going any further, I would like to point out two things to my colleague. First, all committee evidence, as we know, is available because it is transcribed. Second, it was Treasury Board that agreed to provide some funding and it was the minister, the President of Treasury Board at the time of the election campaign, who temporarily withdrew this funding.

In any event, a civil suit was launched against the City of Ottawa and the outcome will show that the then minister was wrong. It is a

question of political judgment. We know that the Conservative government will not win a medal for political judgment.

The current Minister of the Environment interfered in the last municipal election campaign. Will the minister stop using the excuse of confidentiality, which should not apply to the names of Treasury Board ministers? Will he come clean and will he conduct himself like a minister worthy of trust?

When was the meeting held and which Treasury Board members were in attendance?

[*English*]

**Mr. James Moore:** Mr. Speaker, again, this is entirely contrary to what my colleague says. He says that there is some kind of effort here to hide information.

The Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, of which I am a member and have been for over two and a half years, and of which that member is not, had the then president of the treasury board and now current Minister of the Environment before the committee and for two hours he availed himself to all party members of all political parties for questioning on this matter.

He was there. He answered these questions in a televised committee room. We had all the people before the committee who wanted to ask questions. It is interesting that this member apparently has an interest in this issue, and I know he is the deputy whip of the opposition so maybe he is doing this as part of his parliamentary responsibilities, but the fact is the minister made himself available.

He was at committee to answer all these questions. He answered these questions numerous times. He availed himself to his local media. He has spoken to the local city councillors and has made himself entirely open on this process from start to finish.

He has answered all these questions. As a matter of fact, if my memory serves me, at that committee meeting the Liberals ran out of questions and the meeting itself adjourned early. If the Liberals are so concerned about this, they have run out of questions and the minister has already answered all these questions.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Kitchener Centre not being present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

The hon. member for Gatineau.

[*Translation*]

## OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on April 11, I asked the minister responsible for official languages the following question:

Francophone athletes and media representatives with the Canadian mission will be welcomed by bilingual volunteers during the Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games. However, by bilingual, the Canadian Olympic committees mean mastery of English and Mandarin. They have forgotten one of Canada's official languages, our language: French.

Is that yet more proof that nobody really cares about the Quebec nation or its language, and that French has no place in the Canadian Olympic delegation even though it is the official language of the Olympics? Will the government intervene to ensure that French is also required?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

It was the parliamentary secretary responsible for the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics who answered my question. To the great surprise of everyone present, he assured us that the 2010 Olympic Games will be completely bilingual.

The problem with the parliamentary secretary's answer is that he was talking about the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver-Whistler, British Columbia. I was asking about something entirely different, namely the Olympic and Paralympic Games to be held in Beijing in the People's Republic of China in summer 2008. That is the problem with the answer.

When the parliamentary secretary completely derailed, I gently told him that I was asking about Beijing. However, he did not change his answer.

I am generous. After question period, I ran into the parliamentary secretary and he acknowledged that he made a mistake because he did not understand my question at first. I can overlook that.

However, I would like to take advantage of this debate to hear an elected representative of the government explain the adjustments to the bilingualism criterion.

Why Mandarin and English? How did they come up with that? Is this the Conservative government's new approach under its action plan for official languages? By the way, we have been waiting for the government to unveil its new plan since April 1, 59 days ago.

Are the Conservatives planning a round of constitutional talks to eliminate French as an official language of Canada and replace it with Mandarin? We have to wonder.

It would not surprise me in the least. The Conservatives recognize Quebec as a nation on paper only. The Prime Minister, who used to belong to an active coalition that fought among other things against Bill 101 in Quebec, would see it as a way to crush Quebec's identity and French language.

Is the Canadian Olympic Committee, some of whose member sports federations make headlines occasionally for their lack of respect for athletes from Quebec and francophone athletes, also in on the Mandarin movement, in order to eradicate French once and for all?

Canada has been trying to eliminate the French fact for some 245 years. We have only to think of the Durham report and the Union Act in the 1840s, after the patriots in Lower Canada were denied parliamentary democracy. Canada allowed the English-speaking provinces to abolish French-language schools and services. You know as well as I do. Consider the following examples: in 1871—

• (1845)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics has the floor.

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. He is right about his question. About a month ago, or a little more than a month ago, I misheard the beginning of his question and I answered as if he had asked a

question about the 2010 Olympic Games instead of the 2008 Games. That was my fault, I was wrong, but I am grateful for the chance I have here today to correct my answer and give the real answer to his question.

The answer is quite simply that he agreed. I think the origin of his question in April and again today goes back to the articles that were published in *Le Droit*, which expressed the concerns some people had about the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, in terms of services and respect. In fact, there was a lack of respect. Not everything had been done to show respect to athletes from Quebec and all Canadians and Quebecers who want to see the games and listen to them in the official language of their choice.

I can assure my colleague that we are aware of the concerns or problems there are. We are in the process of fixing those problems to the satisfaction of all Canadians, of all Quebecers, of all francophones and all anglophones, so the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing will be enjoyable for all Canadians.

• (1850)

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Mr. Speaker, I am indeed reassured to see that my colleague, the parliamentary secretary to the minister responsible for the 2010 Vancouver-Whistler Games acknowledges the situation. In any event, we had talked about this.

My colleagues may rest assured that I am not going to run through all of the occasions on which Canada has failed in its responsibilities regarding the French fact in Canada and Quebec. In any event, the Bloc Québécois, Quebec athletes and trainers and the francophones of Canada will certainly be watching to make sure that Mandarin is not in fact the other so-called official language of the Canadian contingent in Beijing. Both French and English do have to be used. It is extremely important that no confusion remain on this point.

Out of respect for the Quebec nation, it must be understood that it is a French-speaking nation with its own culture and that French takes precedence there. We respect our anglophone minority, the official minority of Quebec, and we want Canada to respect both official languages, and will insist on this, for as long as we are part of the Canadian federation.

**Mr. James Moore:** Mr. Speaker, we will keep all our commitments in this regard. We certainly respect Canada's two official languages.

I am sure that my colleague from Gatineau is very sincerely concerned about this. I can assure him that Sport Canada and our government take their official languages commitments very seriously and support policies and initiatives that promote the use of both French and English in the Canadian sports system.

I am certain that my colleague will be satisfied with the steps that Sport Canada and its partners have taken to deal with this problem. Thanks to their efforts, francophone athletes and representatives will be served in the language of their choice at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

*Business of Supply*

**The Deputy Speaker:** That concludes the adjournment proceedings. Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn and the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to study all votes under Foreign Affairs and International Trade in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

I do now leave the Chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2008-09

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Foreign Affairs and International Trade in the main estimates, Mr. Bill Blaikie in the chair)

**The Chair:** I might just remind members that pursuant to the motion that was adopted with respect to yesterday evening and this evening, each party will have rounds of 15 minutes and that the answers on the part of ministers should be approximately, generally speaking, the length of time that opposition members or, for that matter, other members take in answering questions or making comments that the minister will then be called upon to respond to.

We will begin with the official opposition, the hon. member for Toronto Centre.

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, it is nice to be working with you again. I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Mount Royal in the first round of 15.

Just to start with a fairly mundane set of questions, just to try to find out about Madam Couillard. Did she have a diplomatic passport? Do we know what kind of passport she had?

• (1855)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Chair, Passport Canada has an approach for diplomatic passports and, in those cases, anyone travelling with a diplomatic passport must be on official government business or be married or be a common-law spouse of someone who is.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, I did not hear an answer. Did she have a diplomatic passport or not?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, he heard the answer. I will not address any Canadian individual's passport.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, were there any official invitations issued in the name of Madam Couillard as a companion to the minister?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, in terms of whatever they may have done as companions, we will not get into people's private lives.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, that is not acceptable. We are asking questions about the fact that she was designated as an official spouse or as an official companion to the minister. She travelled with the

minister on official business. I am asking some very simple, factual questions.

Were invitations issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in the name of the minister and Madam Couillard to receptions or events of any kind? Did she travel on an official passport, either a green one or a red one? What is the answer to that question?

These are official questions dealing with her status as a designated companion of the minister. They are not unreasonable questions. They are not personal. They are not about her private life. They are about her public responsibilities.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, the hon. member says that the individual was designated as an official spouse. I am unfamiliar with that term. In order to answer the question, I would appreciate it if he could explain to me how one gets designated as an official spouse or what exactly that means.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, what I understand is that Madam Couillard's name was submitted by the minister as his travelling companion to the Board of Internal Economy for the purposes of travel.

I am asking a question with respect to her role in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. She travelled on official business with the minister.

I am asking the question: Did she or did she not? I am then asking the question: On what kind of passport did she travel? I am then asking the question: Were any invitations to receptions or events issued with her name by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade on behalf of her and the minister?

These are very simple, factual questions.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, I know the hon. member is new to the House of Commons but he was here in 1979, as I recall, under a very different party banner. He was first elected in 1978.

One's status as a designated traveller, as approved by the Board of Internal Economy, or a designation that someone indicates, has absolutely nothing to do with the person's status for travel as a companion of a minister. That is a designation one makes as a member of Parliament. We all know that relates to the points system that exists for travel with members of Parliament. It has nothing to do with ministers. Whether one is a minister or not, the same rules apply. It is an entirely different issue.

I fail to see what the choice that someone makes for his or her designated traveller has to do with any of the questions being asked. It certainly has nothing to do with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

[Translation]

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, I will not take note of the minister's personal remarks. I am asking very simple questions about the official role played by Ms. Couillard.

Did she have an official Government of Canada passport, that is to say, a special green passport or a red diplomatic one? That is a very clear, simple question.

*Business of Supply*

Were there any invitations from the minister? There are receptions at the department sometimes when hon. members travel or are back in Ottawa. I do not know, I am asking him the question.

I cannot understand why it is so difficult for the government to answer such simple, direct questions. I hope that we will be able to get an answer from the department.

• (1900)

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, the question has been anything but clear and direct. First, there was some strange status called the designated official spouse that I had never heard of, and then it became designated traveller under the Board of Internal Economy, which has nothing to do with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

The member continues to ask me very bizarre questions about things that have very little to do with the Department of Foreign Affairs—

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** It's a question about a passport. Come on, Peter.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** I am sorry, Mr. Chair, I could continue—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Is it a green passport or a red one, Peter?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** One question at a time.

I will simply say this. The Passport Canada office confirms that in order to receive a diplomatic passport a traveller must be a government official on official government business or married to or the common-law spouse of such a traveller.

On the issue of invitations, I am married but I do not know what invitations she gets from the government. Any invitations with which I am familiar have been for me and a guest if I wish to bring a guest. That is my experience on how these things tend to occur.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, I must say, frankly, that I would have expected an answer like that in question period. I have been asking questions for 20 years in question period, here and in Ontario, but I am astonished in a discussion like this one, when we have all the public servants here who know the answers very well, not to get a clear answer from the government. It is amazing, but that is life. It is obviously just the kind of government we have.

[*English*]

Let me ask the minister a question, then, if he can answer this question concerning the events of today with respect to the press release or press commentary made with respect to the meetings between the Prime Minister and Mr. Berlusconi.

I wonder if the minister would agree that if we wanted the Italian government to reduce the number of caveats it had with respect to the activity of its troops in Afghanistan, just about the worst way to do this would be to indicate in a press release that it had in fact agreed to something to which it has not.

**Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister was on this trip pursuing the recommendations of the

Manley panel, which have been embraced by Parliament in terms of the parliamentary resolution on Afghanistan. A critical part of that was to ensure that the Prime Minister and the government pursued a vigorous diplomatic effort to enhance the situation of Canadian troops on the ground in Afghanistan and pursue other objectives.

I think that trip was highly successful. Mr. Berlusconi did commit to review the caveats in the case of Italy.

**The Chair:** The hon. member for Mount Royal. I understand the official opposition will be splitting its time and the time is now being split.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, the priorities of a government are reflected in its budgetary commitments; yet, the word “Darfur” does not appear anywhere in budget plan 2008, just as it did not appear anywhere in the throne speech. We are talking about what the United Nations has called “the greatest humanitarian catastrophe of the 21st century” and what has been referred to as “a genocide by attrition”.

Should this not be the first foreign affairs priority of the government? Does the foreign affairs minister not agree?

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I think the accusation is totally false. The government is deeply concerned about the ongoing situation and humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

Since January 2006, CIDA has provided more than \$102 million in humanitarian assistance to Sudan, Sudanese refugees in Chad, and nearly \$56 million has been directed to Darfur to continue our concern and to demonstrate that we are there when there is a need.

• (1905)

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Chair, I was not saying the government did nothing. I was just making a statement of fact: that it was not identified as anywhere near a priority since no mention of it was made.

In the matter of Burma, the government claims it has invoked strict sanctions on Burma, yet Foreign Affairs says there is no requirement for Canadian companies to register when they do business with Burma. How can the government possibly enforce sanctions if it does not know what is in fact being traded with Burma?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, the truth of the matter is that Canada has taken perhaps the strongest measures in terms of sanctions against Burma. Those sanctions cover a host of issues from exports and imports to investment and personal assets. It is a whole range of very comprehensive sanctions.

On some of the matters in terms of how one tracks the data, it is very difficult, as the member knows, to track indirect investment flows. This can go through multiple companies, layers of companies and subsidiaries of companies. We have our staff tracking the activities of companies as much as they can do so, but we have to rely to some degree on information that comes to us.

I would challenge any of the hon. members to come up with a fiscally and administratively responsible way of actually tracking a lot of these flows when it comes to these kinds of sanctions.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Chair, I would make the recommendation as to registration.

We are witnessing—and have been witnessing for some time—a state sanctioned incitement to genocide whose epicentre is Ahmadinejad's Iran. There have been repeated calls for the disappearance of Israel, dramatized by the parading in the streets of Tehran of a Shahab-3 missile with the words “wipe Israel off the map” and referring to Israel and Jews as “filthy bacteria”, “defilers of Islam”, and the like.

All of this is a clear violation of the prohibition in the genocide convention against the “direct and public” incitement to genocide. The genocide convention also contains a number of remedies, however, to prevent it. Canada is a state party to the genocide convention. We have not only a right to enforce it, but a responsibility to enforce it.

Will the government perhaps take the lead, or join with Australia, which has now indicated it is prepared to take initiatives as authorized by the genocide convention, to hold Ahmadinejad to account before United Nations agencies or other appropriate bodies?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, I think the hon. member knows that Canada has been a leader in the United Nations in pursuing a resolution condemning the human rights record in Iran.

As the member knows, I have been in this portfolio for a couple of days. If there is an initiative under way, it is something that we would certainly undertake to review. I think the hon. member's sentiments are shared philosophically with this government. We certainly will be reviewing the situation.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Chair, I commend the government on its resolution regarding human rights in Iran, but there was no reference in that resolution to the entire issue to which I made reference and which speaks to the invoking of the genocide convention. I would hope that the government would do this as it is the responsibility of Canada as a state party, and as other state parties under the convention are obliged to do.

This is my last question. When asked whether Canada supports the responsibility to protect doctrine, the former foreign affairs minister did not answer the question. So I put the question to the present foreign affairs minister: does the government support the responsibility to protect doctrine?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Chair, as the member knows, this government has been urging along with the United Nations and all the international countries that are working together and are very seriously concerned about the situation in Burma. We know that progress has been made with the Secretary-General's visit to Burma. We know that access has been opened up. More humanitarian workers are in the country and are being given access to the territory that is most devastated. Aid is going there. We will continue to work as part of the international effort in this situation.

• (1910)

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Chair, that long answer was a short “no” to my question.

**The Chair:** If the member has no further questions, then we will proceed to the 15 minutes allotted to the government. My understanding is that the Minister of Foreign Affairs will speak for

10 minutes. Then there will be a five minute question and answer period. At least that is the way things rolled out last night.

The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

**Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Chair, it is a great honour for me to stand in this committee in this House and give my first, albeit brief, speech on foreign affairs.

The government's policy on foreign affairs and international trade is about principle and it is about commitment. We seek a more peaceful and a more secure world. We seek political and economic freedom. We seek the spread of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Greater prosperity for Canadians through open markets and investment is another critical aspect of our approach to foreign policy.

Principles, however, must be connected with interests. This means setting priorities. It means making choices. Above all, it means following through.

Let us talk about Afghanistan. In terms of Canadian interests and values, nowhere is our commitment more clear than in Afghanistan.

All members were part of the debate earlier this year on the future of Canada's mission in Afghanistan. The resolution passed by Parliament extended Canada's role there through June 2011.

Not only did the resolution express the support of Parliament for the mission, it also sent a strong message to our NATO allies. That message had a strong effect at the NATO summit in Bucharest, giving us the leverage we needed to secure more support from our allies for the work we are doing in Afghanistan.

That same strong message spoke clearly of Canada's commitment to the Afghan people. Our commitment can be seen in the 2,500 members of the Canadian Forces serving in Kandahar. It can be seen in the Canadian diplomats, development experts, corrections officers, civilian police and others contributing to the mission.

There will be no quick and easy fix or easy solutions in Afghanistan. And there is a long way to go. Nevertheless, we are making progress. Ministers and officials, the media, and individual Canadians have seen this in their own visits to Afghanistan.

Canada is serving the cause of international peace and security in Afghanistan. We are playing our part as a member of the international community. Canadians know this and they are proud of it.

What about the Americas and the United States? The government came to power with a commitment to improve Canada-U.S. relations. This we have done.

Our strategy of working constructively with the United States administration is paying off. For example, we see it on softwood lumber, border security and broader foreign policy issues.

We have re-established a positive dialogue and a willingness to listen closely to each other. On every issue and at all levels we have worked to ensure that the partnership between Canada and the United States remains respectful, close and productive.

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Canada is also taking a larger role in the Americas. We are laying the foundations to be a long term player in the region. We will contribute where we can to help defuse longstanding conflicts, promote freer trade and strengthen democratic governance.

Haiti is an example of where we can contribute in the short term as well as in the long term. In the short term, Canadian Forces officers and civilian police are helping the country address its day to day security needs. At the same time, we are also strengthening Haitian security institutions, looking forward to the day when they can guarantee their own country's security.

Earlier this year, Canada announced a \$19 million package to strengthen the capacity of the Haitian government and police forces to manage its borders. We are taking a similar approach to social and economic development. We have responded to Haiti's immediate needs, such as food, drinking water and medical aid.

• (1915)

At the same time, we are contributing to longer term social and economic development, for example, in the agricultural sector, to ensure a more secure food supply or an infrastructure where we are literally laying the foundations for a better future by funding a \$75 million road construction project. Progress is being made, but it is a long term project and recent violence shows how fragile these gains can be.

Let us talk about emerging markets. Our third major priority is to strengthen Canada's presence in emerging markets, particularly India and China. The government is committed to helping Canadian business succeed in making Canada the destination of choice for foreign investment. We have set out our plans in the global commerce strategy and have backed up these plans to the tune of \$100 million over the next two years.

What about the Arctic? Our foreign policy in the Arctic is based on the foundations of our integrated northern strategy. The goal of our approach is to support Canada's domestic policies, social and economic development, stronger local government institutions and environmental protection, including the critical issue of climate change.

The future of the north and of the Arctic is a matter of national and global importance. The region is integral to Canada's history and national identity. It is also critical to the future of the planet.

The Northwest Passage is part of Canada's internal waters. Canada's sovereignty over these waters is well established and based on historic title. The government has repeatedly made this clear. This will not change. Nor will the government's position on it.

What about Sudan? The hon. member referred to it earlier. Since January 2006, Canada has committed nearly \$400 million for peace, humanitarian assistance and governance in Sudan. If we combine our UN peacekeeping assessments with our voluntary contributions, Canada will be providing up to \$275 million in assistance to Sudan this year.

In March Canada announced that it would be increasing its assistance, but we will also set down some markers with Sudanese ministers, specifically that the future of our relations depends on Sudan's conduct within its own borders. We urged all parties in

Sudan to end the violence in Darfur, to support the prompt and full deployment of the UN African Union mission in Darfur and to improve the human rights situation in all areas of the country.

In the area of international trade, the goals of Canadian foreign policy are inseparable from our trade and investment strategy. The government believes that a strong, aggressive and forward looking trade and investment strategy is good for Canada, especially in this day of hypercompetitive emerging economies like China, India and Brazil.

Initiatives like "Advantage Canada" are clearly positioning Canada as a more attractive destination for foreign investment and a partner of choice for global business. Take our Asia Pacific gateway initiative, an unprecedented effort to create more Asian trans-Pacific trade both to and through North America. Our global commerce strategy is another important part of our efforts to draw the world's attention to Canada.

A few weeks ago, I stood in the House to table legislation to enact Canada's first free trade agreement since 2001, with the EFTA countries of Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Today, we are signing a free trade agreement with Peru, an economic leader in Latin America. With the EFTA and Peru agreements, our global commerce strategy is getting Canada back on track and we are moving forward with a list of other negotiations around the world, with Colombia, the Caribbean community, the Dominican Republic, Jordan and South Korea.

These agreements will give Canadian businesses and producers more competitive terms of access to key global markets. These efforts are part of a strategic suite of initiatives to get Canadians more involved in the global economy. These include foreign investment, promotion and protection agreements.

These agreements will help Canadians build linkages to the global value chains that are driving business around the world today, such as air services agreements to foster the human links so vital to strong business relations, not to mention carrying high value cargo along global supply and value chains, as well as the science and technology cooperation agreements we are pursuing to work with other innovative countries to develop and market tomorrow's technological breakthroughs.

• (1920)

Finally, there are the market plans being developed by our department and trade commissioners to zero in on the opportunities in global markets. These plans include new trade offices in key markets in China, India, Brazil and elsewhere.

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The global commerce strategy is a comprehensive road map that will help Canadian businesses and investors succeed in the global economy and continue building on our country's long-standing heritage as a trading nation. We are proud of our success to date and there will be much more to come in the time ahead.

On the issue of democracy and human rights, the government has also been proud to maintain Canada's enduring commitment to freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. I will continue to make our views known bilaterally and in multilateral fora, such as the United Nations, in NATO, the G-8 and in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

Among the multilateral fora of importance to Canada it is la Francophonie. The French language and culture remain an integral to Canada's identity. We look forward to Summit 2008 this October in Quebec City and to the city's 400th anniversary.

Let me close my remarks by saying a few words about my department. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is made up of people that match our ambitions on the world stage, with the required talent, the dedication and the energy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them and recognize their professionalism and dedication.

Canada is back, but the work of Canadian foreign policy and international commerce is never done. Interest and values have to be advocated and defended at all times. This is unchanging. Equally unchanging is the commitment and determination with which I will continue to promote Canada's interests and values on the world stage. Of that, members have my highest assurance.

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Chair, in the spirit of thanks, we should continue by thanking the minister who has obviously been rewarded for his diligence and hard work in the trade department. It has been recognized by the Prime Minister that he can take on this new task. He needs to know the government is solidly behind him in that challenge and we will be there to support him in it.

Speaking of leadership, it is under the leadership of the international trade minister that we signed our first free trade agreement since 2001, the agreement the EFTA. Many people ask, what is the EFTA? The minister has already acknowledged it is the European Free Trade Association, those countries that are not in the EU.

The minister recognized that this was the way Canada would have a doorway to that huge opportunity, that huge trading bloc, the European Union. It was under his leadership that we signed an agreement with Iceland, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

I had the privilege to visit a few of these countries on behalf of the minister. I saw for myself the tremendous benefits. One simple one is they consume purely Canadian durum for their pastas. There was an 8% tariff on that. Guess what? That is gone now: no tariff, plain and simple. If no one else, my wheat farmers are very happy about that.

That is only one example of what has happened with this first transatlantic free trade agreement. Canada now has a doorway to the European market.

Canada and the EFTA both enjoy access to some of the richest markets. Not only is it a benefit for us, but it is a doorway for the EFTA countries into our NAFTA trading bloc as well. They see that as a benefit. That is the beauty of free trade agreements, they are two way.

I enjoy talking about all the accomplishments of the trade minister. We know they will be reflected in his leadership in foreign affairs.

Could he perhaps explain some of the other benefits that he sees through EFTA into the European market?

• (1925)

**The Chair:** Before I recognize the minister, the minister went overtime and there was very little time left. Then the member for Macleod went on at some length.

The minister now has about 10 seconds left to respond.

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, I will be as brief as I can.

The EFTA will be a very important watershed for the evolution of Canada's trade relations over the next few decades. As the hon. member said, it creates immediate benefits. The amount of trade between the EFTA countries and Canada is actually quite substantial, something in the order of \$14 billion in 2007. Direct investment between Canada and the EFTA countries is something like \$28 billion.

It will provide a tremendous footprint for Canadian companies to get involved in the European market because the EFTA countries have free trade with the EU, and we will be there next.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** The Bloc Québécois has 15 minutes now. The hon. member for Joliette.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Chair, like the House leader, the new foreign affairs minister and former international trade minister must expect that we too, like our Liberal colleagues, will want to clarify certain aspects of this saga between the hon. member for Beauce and Ms. Julie Couillard. It is for the purpose of keeping the people of Quebec and Canada informed.

Everyone knows that when the hon. member for Beauce was the foreign affairs minister, he forgot some documents at Ms. Couillard's place. She has said that they were forgotten around the middle of April, or shortly after the NATO summit in Bucharest.

Originally, the Prime Minister said during his press conference that the foreign affairs minister resigned because he had left classified confidential documents—those were his words—in non-secure places. This is what led to his resignation because it was a serious mistake.

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I would like to ask a question, and I suppose that it will be the House Leader who answers and not the new foreign affairs minister. If they have strict security rules at the Department of Foreign Affairs, how is it possible that the neither this department nor the office of the minister at the time, the hon. member for Beauce, noticed that the documents had disappeared over the ensuing five weeks?

This all seems very nebulous to me and I would like a clear answer. It has nothing to do with the private lives of the hon. member for Beauce or Ms. Couillard.

How could documents, some of which the Prime Minister has described as “classified”, possibly just disappear for five weeks from the radar screens of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the office of its former minister?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, the issue is one of documents that were left inappropriately by the member for Beauce in an unsecured place and some were classified documents. As has been observed by my friend, it was inappropriate for them to be left in that place. Whether it be for five weeks, or five days or five hours, it matters not. It does not matter whether it was Madame Couillard's home or, as I have said on other occasions, the front steps of the Parliament buildings. In either case it would have been in appropriate. That is why the resignation of the minister of foreign affairs was offered, because he had violated the rules.

That I think led to a question about what measures the department had in place for tracking documents. There is a government security policy, and it is obviously too lengthy for me to answer in the brief time I have. For the benefit of my friend, he can review it on the Treasury Board Secretariat website. It outlines all the requirements that have to be followed by all departments for documents. That policy is also supplemented by what are known as operational standards. Those standards provide some additional guidance to departments in a number of areas, including how to meet the requirements of the Security of Information Act in physical and personnel security.

As I have indicated as well in the House, Foreign Affairs and International Trade is conducting a review. It will continue to operate in the future to ensure that all sensitive materials are properly protected and treated appropriately.

• (1930)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Chair, I thank the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons for his answer; except that he did not answer my question.

How do documents disappear? How can documents, identified by the Prime Minister as “classified” disappear for five weeks and the department does not notice; the minister's office does not realize it, the minister was not aware of it and the Prime Minister was not informed? There is something there.

Is the reason for this mistake—I am not referring to the mistake by the member for Beauce, but rather the administrative apparatus—the incompetence of bureaucrats in the Department of Foreign Affairs, or quite simply a somewhat causal approach on the part of the offices of the minister and the Prime Minister? I am asking him

the question. If it is not the fault of the minister and not the fault of the Prime Minister, is it the fault of the Foreign Affairs department and its public servants?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, the responsibility in the case is actually quite simple and quite clear. It was a laxity, an error on the part of the member for Beauce as minister of foreign affairs. He had the documents. They were his responsibility. He left them in an unsecured place. That is where the fault lies. That is where the responsibility lies. That is the responsibility that the member for Beauce assumed and that is why he offered his resignation, and that is why the resignation was accepted by the Prime Minister.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Chair, once again, my question has not been answered. I understand very well, and I share, the discomfort of the government and all members of Parliament in the face of the mistake by the member for Beauce. However, that does not excuse the failure by the government bureaucracy—for a period of five weeks—to notice the disappearance of what the Prime Minister describes as “classified” documents, which is what the Leader of the Government is telling us from the government side.

I put this question to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons or perhaps to the new Minister of Foreign Affairs. What steps will be taken by the department and by the government to avoid a repetition of a situation such as this? I believe that everyone here will agree that when documents disappear for five weeks without anyone noticing—which is what they are telling us—that is a situation that must be corrected. What measures will be taken to correct the situation?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, there were numerous questions there. Of course, the reason why we had the problem is the documents were thought to be in the carriage of the minister and it turned out they were not. They were left in an unsecured location. That is why the problem occurred and that is why the resignation occurred. It is no more complex, no more simple than as I have presented it.

I have indicated that there are standards that must be upheld. The standards are quite clear and in this case the standards were not upheld. It was the failure to uphold those standards that resulted in the resignation of the minister. That is a very serious price to pay and it is a consequence of the standards not being followed. It is not a failure of the standards. It is a consequence of the standards not being followed that led to the resignation.

*Business of Supply*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Chair, again, everyone here will agree that what has been told to us, and no one has questioned it, is that Ms. Couillard said she had the documents at her home, according to her account, since about mid-April. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons told us on several occasions that the government was not made aware of the disappearances until Sunday, and the Prime Minister only learned of it on Monday. For a period of five weeks, documents were missing from the Department of Foreign Affairs. Yet, they tell us that the rules are strict; that there are standards that were not respected by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and he has paid the price. Yes, he has paid the price; but how will they ensure that it does not happen again the next time a minister forgets documents at someone's home, or loses them or puts them under the mattress and forgets that they are under the mattress? I am not just talking about the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It could be the Minister of International Trade or National Defence or any other minister.

How can they guarantee that the departments concerned will quickly identify those documents as missing, so that we do not relive the situation we have been through in the past few weeks?

They are not answering our question. What I understand is that the government does not intend to correct the situation and the events that we have seen in recent weeks with the Department of Foreign Affairs and the former Minister of Foreign Affairs could happen again at any time with this government. Unless it wants to be irresponsible, the government must correct the situation.

• (1935)

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, I did not hear anything from my friend suggesting there is a flaw in the standards that are in place or a flaw in the government's security policy. I did not hear any of those things from the member.

Therefore, I will continue to restate to him that in that regard it does not appear that the problem is with the standards. It does not appear that there needs to be a change there. The problem was, in fact, the failure to respect those standards and that is where we ended up in a problem, because government documents were left in an unsecured place and in so doing, those rules and standards were contravened.

I would hope that the example that has occurred in this instance and the price the minister has paid serves as an educational example to all of us about the importance of following those policies and upholding those standards. I hope that it will have a salutary effect in ensuring that is the case in the future.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Chair, something is not right about what the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons told us. Everyone agrees that the member for Beauce made a mistake. But how does the government explain the fact that if Ms. Couillard had not revealed on TVA that the documents had been at her home since mid-April, we probably would not even know about it today?

If I speed—and it happens from time to time, as I imagine it does with other MPs—a police officer with a radar gun could pull me

over, tell me that I broke the law and that I will have to pay. In this case, I am hearing that within the machinery of government, there is no police force and no way of ensuring that the rules are followed.

Once again, if Ms. Couillard had not revealed this information on TVA, the document could very well still be at her home. It could have been used for other means, and—from what we have been told—the minister would not have even known it was missing. I do not believe any of it.

I have one more question about this issue, and if I still have time, I will ask about the Omar Khadr affair.

What guarantees can the government give us that these classified documents—as the Prime Minister called them—did not constitute a danger to public safety, that they were not used by Ms. Couillard for other means, and that they did not end up in the wrong hands?

What guarantees can the government give us? Has it investigated? Are they just trusting in the good faith of Ms. Couillard, in spite of her unfortunate past connections? How has the government investigated to back up its statement that there were no leaks?

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, I would like to cover a few points. First, the hon. member said there is no policy in place, or at least that is what the interpretation said. There is, in fact, a policy in place. I referred to it a little bit earlier. It is the government's security policy.

For his information it is posted on the Treasury Board Secretariat website if he wishes to enquire into it and it will provide him with information on what those requirements are. As I indicated, each department has its own supplemental operational standards which are in place. So, there are policies and there are standards in place which is quite clear.

As for the question of what will be done to ensure there were no outstanding security issues, first, we know two things with regard to the documents. They were returned. Madame Couillard did that after consulting her lawyers and recognized they were the property of the government. So we do know they have been returned. In that regard, that has been addressed.

With regard to any other questions, the Department of Foreign Affairs is conducting a review. It has the ability to draw on the considerable resources of this government and the agencies that exist for that purpose with expertise if it feels it is necessary to satisfy itself with regard to any other security questions.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Chair, I understand that the former minister of foreign affairs, the member for Beauce, is taking all the blame for this and that nobody has any intention of changing a thing. This could happen again anytime.

There is absolutely no guarantee that between April 15 and the day the documents were returned to the Department of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Couillard or other individuals did not use the documents for other purposes. It seems to me that in this case, the government was negligent at best, and at worst, attempted to hide the truth in order to mislead Canadians and Quebecers.

*Business of Supply*

Not only am I extremely disappointed, but I believe that tomorrow and every day after that, the Bloc Québécois and the other opposition parties must continue to force the government to reveal the truth, given that the government is incapable of disciplining itself. Fortunately, the opposition, particularly the Bloc Québécois, is here to help.

I would like to use the few minutes I have left to talk about Omar Khadr. As we all know, Omar Khadr is a young man who was taken by his family, particularly his father, into al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. Nobody is disputing that. He was 11 years old at the time.

My question is this. If an 11-year-old Canadian is taken by his father into an al-Qaeda camp, is he responsible for the decision to be in that terrorist camp? My question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Well, how about that—with the Prime Minister gone, there is just one minister in the House: the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

● (1940)

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, my friend made a lengthy statement again about the issue of the security policy and that is why I am responding to address that. I heard him suggest that what the government is saying is that an individual committed a mistake and therefore there is no need to change the policy because the individual contravened the policy. That is what happened. When the rules are contravened, then they are enforced in this fashion and disciplined in this fashion. That is why a resignation took place.

I have to reaffirm once again that I did not hear from my friend any suggestion there is a problem with those rules. He suggested the rules should be changed, but he offered no way in which the rules should be changed or the standards should be changed. In fact, it appears that the standards and the rules are in place, are the correct standards and rules, and the problem is simply that they were not followed.

That is why it is indeed the responsibility of the individual who did not follow the rules. It is not the fault of the rules that they were broken. It is the fault of the individual who committed the error and he took that responsibility by offering his resignation, and the government accepted that resignation. In that way there was accountability as there should be.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I want to begin by congratulating the member, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, on his new appointment.

I am tempted to ask him the same question I asked the previous minister of foreign affairs, and that is, who is the president Haiti, but I am sure he knows who that is.

Seriously, I understand there is a policy document that has been produced by the deputy minister of foreign affairs which outlines the government's vision for the future of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Canadians want to know where this government is going in foreign affairs. So, my question is very simple. Could the minister confirm that a document has been written about the future of foreign affairs with this government and if so, could he provide it for us?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, we have a series of strategic vision documents in foreign affairs and international trade. Much of them relate to the trade side, with which of course I am most familiar. I am just getting myself into the foreign affairs side of it and will be assessing the documents that articulate the overall vision, in terms of foreign affairs and the future of our department.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I appreciate the minister being new to this, but my question is very specific.

There has been a document produced by the department on its vision, not of trade but of foreign affairs. I am asking very specifically of the minister, does such a document exist and if he could share it with us? That is the question. It is not about the trade side; it is about a document being provided for him and Canadians would like to know where this government is going on foreign affairs.

That is my question. I would appreciate an answer.

● (1945)

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, we certainly have had what is called an internal government strategic review done focused on foreign affairs. That work has been ongoing for a couple of years. It has helped to shape budget decision making and it certainly has given guidance in terms of the strategic directions that we are taking in a variety of areas, and helped to shape the broad themes and parameters of our foreign policy.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for narrowing things down a bit in his response. So, we have established that there is a document. We have established that this is the direction the government is going. Remember that the “Canada First” defence policy we had to kind of taper down to get that out as well. I just want to ask if he can provide us with a copy of that.

My question is: Could the minister provide this committee with a copy of the direction of his department?

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I hear cackles in the back, but I think Canadians want to know what the direction of the foreign affairs file is. I would like to ask the minister, is he willing to provide this committee with that document, yes or no?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, the strategic review involves a number of cabinet level documents. What I certainly can do is to provide the member with a substantial amount of information that was part of those documents, and I am perfectly willing to do that. However, I cannot give him classified cabinet documents.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I am requesting that formally.

I would like to switch, now, to something that has already been brought up earlier by, I think, a member from the Liberal Party regarding Burma.

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In fact, it was the order paper questions that I put forward and the responses from the government that established the following. When I asked the government what Canadian companies, individuals and public pension funds have direct investments in Burma, what is the total of those investments and how can we establish what Canadian companies have investments in Burma, the minister replied earlier that it was very difficult to track and if there was any way to do it, he would like to know and would like to hear suggestions. However, he was talking about indirect investments.

My question is about direct investments. According to the document I received, which was the government's response officially from the department, there is no requirement for Canadian companies to register their business activities with the department; sources of information are derived from various non-government organizations. Then it goes on about how it might get that.

My question is very specific. If this government were to suggest that it has the toughest sanctions on Burma, how could it do that when its own department is saying there is no requirement for Canadian companies to register at all vis-à-vis direct investment in Burma? Could the minister tell me how he can know what investments are in Burma when there is no requirement for Canadian companies to register direct investments in Burma?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, we clearly are tracking publicly available data. We are tracking the exports and imports. We are tracking such direct investment information as we can access. Those numbers have been shrinking and they are now extremely small.

For us to set up a very expensive bureaucracy simply to ask companies to register direct investments in a sanctioned country like Burma would be, to me, a total waste of money. If a company wanted to wilfully evade the rules, and I do not sense there are those companies out there, it would be very easy to find a way of channelling the money which would not be caught by any tracking of direct investment.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, sadly, I am going to have to ask a question of the minister. If he is saying that this is too difficult and it is hard to track, then how is it that he can enforce the sanctions at all? What he is saying to us is that we have the toughest sanctions but it turns out to be a paper tiger because the departmental response is saying very directly there is no requirement for Canadian companies to register their business activities with the department. Are we to rely on Google? How is it that we are going to actually enforce the rules? How is the government going to enforce the rules on sanctions vis-à-vis Burma?

The last point I will suggest to him is that he has the tool in his hands. It is SEMA. The Special Economic Measures Act allows the government to tailor sanctions. It could, if it chose to, require all companies that are investing in Burma to register with the government and put the onus on them to pay for it. Why is the government not doing that?

• (1950)

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, if the evidence was overwhelming that there was a major circumvention of these sanctions, the government would clearly have to consider further steps, but at the present time there is no such evidence. All the evidence we are seeing suggests the sanctions are very effective. We see little point in

setting up what in all likelihood would become a potentially monstrous bureaucracy to try to chase funds that would be channelled around the globe and in through the back door.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I think Canadians would be shocked and surprised to learn that the government on the one hand is claiming to have the toughest sanctions in the world vis-à-vis Burma and on the other hand is saying there is absolutely no method to monitor this to find out if that is the case.

Is there any way for the government to track at least what existing investments the Canada pension plan has in Burma? Is it aware of any Canadian investments of the Canada pension plan in Burma, yes or no?

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Chair, the answer is quite simple. According to the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, the Canada pension plan is in full compliance with SEMA measures, with no investments in Burma that we are aware of.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I note that was not my question. I asked if the government could tell us how much investment there is, in dollar amounts, presently in Burma, not vis-à-vis the sanctions brought in. Hopefully the government knows that the sanctions were for any future investments, not existing investments. How much money does the Canada pension plan presently have invested in Burma? When I say presently invested in Burma, that is existing investments.

Will the government please tell the committee how much money the Canada pension plan has invested in Burma now?

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Chair, when the special economic measures were put in place, Canadian companies known to DFAIT had divested, or were divesting, their interests in Burma, with the exception of CHC Helicopter, which was locked in a long term contract with Total and Petronas. CHC was subsequently acquired by a U.S. private equity firm, which has reiterated its commitment to divest all of CHC's interest in Burma.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I think the member should probably talk to the fund managers at the CPP because they certainly phoned me when I suggested we should have tougher sanctions with Burma. They have a longer list than he has, so he might want to check with them.

I will turn now to the UN. I would like to ask a very straightforward question of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Is Canada going to be pursuing a chair on the Security Council in the upcoming round, yes or no?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, I have been in this portfolio for a couple of days and one thing is clear that we have been doing and will continue to do and that is to aggressively participate in supporting the UN, working under UN mandates such as in Afghanistan, in Sudan and elsewhere in the world. The position in the Security Council is not up until 2010. We will cross that bridge in due course.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, on my first question I asked for a yes or no response. Will he or will he not be pursuing a seat at the Security Council? I take it that the answer is no, unless he has when the due course is. That is the first question.

*Business of Supply*

The second question is one on Sudan which was referenced earlier. I would like to know how much the government is contributing to the Resolution 1769 peacekeeping mission. I do not want to know how much we are contributing to Sudan in general. I would like to know specifically for the Resolution 1769 peacekeeping mission how much we are contributing to that mission.

• (1955)

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, I believe I gave the hon. member that number earlier. I think it was \$270 million as I recall, but I will check that with my officials.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I was specifically asking how much we are contributing to the Resolution 1769 mission. Previously when I asked the government this question at committee and in the House, the Conservatives said they were not going to be contributing particularly to the rental of helicopters. They said there would actually be other announcements on this. I am asking the government now if it has changed its position, if it is investing more. I heard very clearly they suggest—

**Mr. Gary Goodyear:** Did you forget the answer?

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, if the peanut gallery could just quiet down a bit; I thought they were at a movie tonight.

If the minister could get back to the committee on this, that would be helpful. I did ask for a yes or no answer regarding the chair on the Security Council. I would appreciate an answer on that as well.

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, I want to review the government's participation in Sudan. Canada is a very major contributor to the development and protection of human rights in Sudan. Since January 2006, Canada has provided over \$431 million in voluntary contributions toward the establishment of lasting peace in Sudan. In addition to our assessed contributions of \$84 million for the UN peacekeeping missions in Sudan, Canada will invest up to \$191 million in voluntary contributions toward long term peace in 2008-09. This will mean a total investment of up to \$275 million in 2008-09. Across three areas, there is \$155 million for security, including assessed contributions; \$100 million for aid; and \$20 million for diplomacy.

**The Chair:** I will now proceed to the second round of the first rotation.

I recognize the hon. Minister of International Cooperation.

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Chair, colleagues, I welcome this opportunity to discuss our estimates and CIDA's role in the world.

Under the leadership of the Prime Minister and this government, Canada's international assistance will be more effective, focused and accountable. Long gone are the days of Liberal hollow promises and inefficient, unaccountable international assistance. Our government is working to make Canada's aid more focused, effective and accountable. This government is showing compassion for the less fortunate.

Recently, Canadians have witnessed our government's quick response to the natural disasters in both Burma and China, but we did not believe that funnelling millions of dollars to a military regime halfway around the world would truly help hundreds of thousands of people who were suffering. We acted responsibly. We immediately

announced \$2 million to groups with access on the ground to those in need, such as the Red Crescent Society. We loaded emergency shelter kits to protect some 10,000 people against the elements and harsh conditions.

This week the Burmese government granted more access to international aid workers, and so, just last week, I announced that Canada would be matching individual personal Canadian donations to organizations with the access, capacity and ability to deliver the needed aid directly to victims. This aid will provide food, shelter, emergency health care and clean water.

In response to natural disasters, it is our goal to act quickly, efficiently, accountably and with compassion.

In our development work our goal is to help developing nations gain the skill and the expertise they need to be self-sufficient and able to provide basic services to their own people, and so, we are refocusing our mission in Afghanistan. As the independent panel report, the Manley report, stated, progress is being made in Afghanistan, but more work is to be done. As a government, we agree with the recommendations of the report.

With the report as a guiding principle, we have put more CIDA officers in the field and delegated more authority to staff on the ground. We are working to ensure better cooperation and coordination through our whole of government approach. We are continuing our efforts to inform Canadians through regular briefings with the media.

As one of the top donors in Afghanistan with \$1.3 billion through to 2011, I am confident that with our international partners we can make a difference in the lives of the Afghan people.

As Kai Eide, UN Special Representative for Afghanistan, said, "The way you in Canada spend your [aid] money is an example I would like to see for other countries".

As more security gains ground, we will be able to see more girls in school, more female teachers, greater strides in economic development and increased access to basic health services. Currently, as the House knows, the cabinet committee is establishing priorities, benchmarks and timelines.

Working with the Afghan government and our international partners, Canada can be proud of our part in bringing Afghanistan closer to a stronger, freer and self-sustaining country.

As you know, Mr. Chair, our government has also made a significant commitment to Africa. The Prime Minister announced funding for the Canadian-led Initiative to Save a Million Lives. In Africa, our contribution will train over 40,000 front line health care workers. Our funding will help combat measles, guard against diphtheria and fight pneumonia.

*Business of Supply*

● (2000)

A promise our Prime Minister made is that we are doubling our aid to Africa, a substantial increase over the previous government's support, and this is a promise we will keep. However, we will do it effectively, accountably and with compassion for the less fortunate.

When I visited a small school in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, I witnessed young boys and girls gaining the knowledge that will not only enrich their lives but also the lives of their family members. There is no doubt that education and literacy is key to a better life, leading to improved health care and more opportunities toward self-sufficiency.

However, we must also remember to remain flexible, able to respond to emerging issues.

Recently, caused by many factors, the world found itself facing a quiet tsunami: the food crisis. Those who live on the lowest levels of income are struggling to feed themselves and their families, and Canada again answered the international appeal.

Canadians can be proud that of all the developed countries in the world, Canada has been the third largest country contributor to the World Food Programme over the last two years under this government.

However, I was shocked to learn that the former government, after signing the international Food Aid Convention, shortchanged the world's hungry by over 200,000 metric tonnes of food. In fact, since 2000, the Liberal government failed to meet its food aid commitment more times than it met it.

Since becoming government, we have met our commitment on food aid each and every year we have been in office. It is through partnerships with organizations like the Canadian Foodgrains Bank that we are helping to address the global food crisis.

Last month I announced an additional \$50 million, a 28% increase in our food aid and the untying of our food aid. This means our food aid will be more efficiently acquired and delivered and can be used to support local or regional farmers in areas across the world. This will make a difference to people in Africa, Afghanistan, South America and Haiti.

As the executive director of the World Food Programme has said:

This generous contribution by Canada will help protect millions of children from severe malnutrition and hunger.

This is a global crisis and our government will ensure that we are part of the international effort to not only meet the immediate emergency need but to find the longer term solutions. Canada will always be part of international efforts to support the victims of conflict and poverty.

In conclusion, I remind the House that the Prime Minister stated:

We are a country of the Americas, re-engagement in our hemisphere is a critical international priority for our Government. Canada is committed to playing a bigger role in the Americas and to doing so for the long term -

I just returned from a meeting at the Caribbean Development Bank where I heard that Canada's significant contribution to the bank's special development fund is supporting many countries in the Caribbean and helping them meet their developmental needs.

As one of our main missions in the Americas, we recently came to Haiti's aid with \$10 million in additional food aid, as well as \$10 million in accelerated programs that will ensure food is available.

In the Americas, we are working to promote Canada's foundational pillars of security, prosperity and democratic governance. We are developing programs but I must say that the appreciation I heard for the past two days from different countries across the Caribbean, as well as representatives from Central and South America, is that we are doing our part.

● (2005)

Canada is doing its share around the world in its international development efforts. Our government is focused on achieving effective, accountable, measurable and sustainable results.

I want to assure Canadians that when Canada puts forward its international assistance, we will ensure that it does in fact help the people it is intended to help. We will always be responsible, not only about making large announcements and large monetary announcements, we will ensure that the food, the water, the shelter and the medicine that people need will get to those who are in need. That is a commitment from this government.

We do have priorities. We have a priority to ensure Canadians can trust this government to represent them well, to be responsible and to show the compassion that Canadians feel for all people.

**The Deputy Chair:** As I am just assuming the chair at this moment, I would like to thank all hon. members for their cooperation last night during the committee of the whole and I beg for your indulgence between now and 11 o'clock. I would like to give the same advice that I gave last night about making every effort to depersonalize the debate by asking all questions in the third person and not in the second person.

I recognize the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development who will have three and a half minutes for the question and the answer.

● (2010)

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, in my riding of Blackstrap, there is a concern with the rising cost of food around the world. As the minister noted, Canadians can be proud that of all the developed countries in the world Canada has been the third largest contributor to the World Food Programme over the last two years. In fact, I know it is this government's compassion for the less fortunate that has guided the minister in her portfolio.

On the topic of food aid, the minister has received a number of positive comments from organizations and individuals. Oxfam stated:

Canada is already one of the most generous donors to the WFP, and we are very pleased that Canada continues to show leadership to the world in responding to humanitarian crises as they arise.

*Business of Supply*

It was the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca who pointed out, after the minister's most recent food aid announcement, that:

The untying of aid is a good decision on the part of the government. Untying aid enables the World Food Programme to be able to get the best bang for the buck.

The executive director of the World Food Programme said:

This generous contribution by Canada will help protect millions of children from severe malnutrition and hunger.

I know the minister touched on the silent tsunami in her speech but I wonder if she would elaborate on what she has witnessed firsthand as she has travelled to some of the world's hardest hit countries.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Chair, in my travels, I have seen levels of poverty that I know many members in this House would like to address, but it is important that to ensure we address them in such a way that it enables them to eat, not just today, tomorrow and next month, but a year, five years or ten years from now. Consequently, we were proud to respond immediately to the appeal by the World Food Programme. It asked for an increase of 26% and Canada responded with an increase of 28%.

I also saw that many of those who live at the poverty level do agriculture in order to feed their families. It has been said that tying one's food aid says more about wanting to help one's own country than wanting to help people in other countries. When we took office, only 50% of food aid was untied. This government has gone forward and completely untied 100% of food aid. This means that food can now be acquired more locally, regionally and support local farmers and producers in those countries and regions.

**Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with my colleagues from Pierrefonds—Dollard and Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

This evening we have been talking about very important issues and one important issue that needs to be addressed is the government's view regarding political responsibility.

One important issue that it neglects to speak to with open transparency is the whole NAFTA-gate affair. It is not simply about diplomatic information being leaked, it is about serious political interference.

We hear further allegations and I want clarification regarding those further allegations because it has definitely damaged our relationship with our most important trading partner, friend and ally, the United States.

There are many unanswered questions with respect to the Lynch report that was made public on a Friday afternoon when the House had risen.

The question I have is with respect to Frank Sensenbrenner, the son of the Republican congressman who worked at the Canadian embassy in Washington. Could the minister clarify whether Mr. Sensenbrenner obtained his contract as a result of pressure by the PMO or other cabinet ministers, as media reports suggest?

• (2015)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, I have addressed that question on a number of occasions in the House of Commons already.

The concern that arose with regard to the information about the American presidential candidates, their views on NAFTA and the

potential leak of a document from within Foreign Affairs was a matter of great concern to the government. That is why the Prime Minister asked the Clerk of the Privy Council to conduct an investigation into the matter.

The Clerk of the Privy Council did exactly that. There was an extensive investigation. I know the hon. member from the official opposition was actually quite impatient that it took as long as it did and was as thorough as it was, but the Clerk of the Privy Council certainly wanted to ensure it was as thorough as it could be to get full results. In fact, he went to the length of obtaining the services of two outside professional firms with expertise in the area to assist him with that research and examination of the concern with the investigation.

The findings of that were actually released in a very clear and conclusive manner. I will focus on the three main findings.

The first finding was that the Prime Minister's chief of staff, contrary to what members had said repeatedly, had not been involved in any leak of any classified information and he was cleared entirely.

There is a pattern here of issues raised by opposition members that they assert as fact and then we discover later, once there is an investigation, that it is not the case. I hope he will offer an apology based on what was in the Clerk of the Privy Council's report on those allegations.

Similarly, they made the same kind of allegations—

**The Deputy Chair:** It is with regret that I must interrupt the hon. the government House leader. The hon. member for Mississauga—Brampton South has the floor.

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** Mr. Chair, I would like to remind the hon. member opposite that the report very clearly said that the indiscretions of the hand-picked people by the Prime Minister caused this international fiasco. The report clearly indicates that.

My question again is specifically with regard to the role of Frank Sensenbrenner. In the investigation of the leaked report in the NAFTA-gate affairs, was Mr. Sensenbrenner's possible involvement investigated? All I want clarification on is whether his involvement was investigated, and, if so, whether he was cleared of any wrongdoing.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, the assertion the member made about the Clerk of the Privy Council's report must have been from some other report because I know I read that report quite thoroughly and I never heard any suggestion of any leak. In fact, he said that neither the Prime Minister's chief of staff nor the Canadian ambassador to Washington, the hon. Michael Wilson, had made any leak of any classified information.

What was pointed to was the third element I wanted to get out, which was a very unwise, wide distribution and a misclassification of a memorandum that was produced out of the Chicago consular offices. First, they felt that it was not a classified document, but it should have been treated as a much more secure document, and second, in its distribution, it went to over 200 addresses. That obviously was problematic in the circumstances.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Navdeep Bains:** Mr. Chair, again, I said this at the beginning of my remarks. This is about political responsibility. Again, he failed to see the point. The point is very simple. The government has to take political responsibility.

I will quote from the report where it says very clearly, and the report says this, so I will see if the member has a problem with this, "it appears probable that Mr. Brodie spoke to the reporter on the subject of NAFTA". It is very clear that the indiscretion of a hand-picked person, his close adviser, started this international incident

Again, back to my question with respect to the report itself. Regarding Mr. Sensenbrenner, if he were hired, what value for money did he provide in his services with the embassy? What steps has the department taken to ensure that the source of the leaked document was in DFAIT? It cannot be a matter of simply too many emails. It hired these private investigators. They cost over \$140,000. The member cannot simply tell us that after the investigation, there were too many emails to follow up, or they chose not to pick up the phone and make the calls.

This is about political responsibility and I would like to have the answers to these questions.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, on the contrary. What the member asserts is quite wrong. He says that the indiscretion of the Prime Minister's chief of staff was to refer to NAFTA. It is not an indiscretion to refer to NAFTA. I speak about NAFTA all the time. NAFTA is a very important part of Canada's trade policy. It has been important for creating hundreds of thousands of jobs. In fact, it is so important to Canada that the Liberal Party, after having fought tooth and nail to stop it and having run an election where they promised Canadians they would wipe it out, actually kept it. That is how important it is.

With regard to the comments of the Prime Minister's chief of staff, the report, and I will read from it since the member is not good enough to do so, says the following:

Any comments Mr. Brodie may have made during the lock-up did not reveal any information tied to the diplomatic report, of which he was made aware only on February 28. There is no evidence that Mr. Brodie disclosed any classified information.

He should read that to the House, he should apologize to Mr. Brodie and he should tell that to all Canadians.

• (2020)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Chair:** I now recognize the hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard, but I must inform him that his colleague, the hon. member for Mississauga—Brampton South, used two minutes of his time.

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, my question is of course for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

On May 14, 2008, in Halifax, the Prime Minister unveiled his Canada first defence strategy. He said he wanted to strengthen the armed forces' ability to protect our citizens and Canada's Arctic sovereignty.

With respect to this Arctic sovereignty, which is so important to everyone, can the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us if he intends to

re-establish the position of ambassador for circumpolar affairs, a position that this government eliminated in 2006?

[*English*]

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, what the hon. member should realize is the government has a very strong and aggressive strategy for the Arctic. We are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in icebreaker and patrol vessel capacity and in port capacity in the north, in mapping the seabed in the north, in preparing ourselves for the boundary resolution under the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea.

There is a massive effort underway that focuses on a broad range of areas in the Arctic. I believe this will open up Canada's Arctic like never before.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** Mr. Chair, the minister knows very well that Ellesmere Island, the most northerly island in the Canadian Arctic, is home to the Ward Hunt Ice Shelf. A Canadian army patrol, known as the sovereignty patrol, along with a team of scientists, has discovered huge cracks, which herald rapidly accelerating melting of Arctic ice.

Last year, Arthur Chilingarov, a former Arctic explorer and current vice-president of the Duma, went down to the bottom of the Arctic Ocean at the North Pole in a bathyscaphe to plant the Russian flag and claim the Arctic as Russian soil. The response of Canada's Prime Minister the following week was that Canada was going to build six to eight warships, not just ice breakers, but ice-worthy warships to patrol the Arctic.

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs not believe that Canada should work diplomatically with other countries instead of building ice-worthy warships?

[*English*]

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, my hon. colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, just came back from a conference in Greenland, where a number of countries with an interest in the Arctic were working very constructively around issues of the continental shelf and the resolution of the management of the environment, of the economy and of shipping up in the Arctic. To me, that is diplomacy.

We are working constructively. We will work through the United Nations, but we need hardware, aircraft, vessels and satellite capacity. We will have to do more than just talk.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** Mr. Chair, I would simply like to say to the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs that under the previous government it was the Minister of Foreign Affairs who was responsible for Canadian diplomacy, not the Minister of Natural Resources.

I would like to ask a quick question. Are there currently any negotiations or discussions between Canada and the United States concerning the delineation of the Canadian maritime zones in the Beaufort Sea?

*Business of Supply*

• (2025)

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order. I believe that there is a problem with the interpretation. Those on the other side are not hearing the English.

**The Deputy Chair:** We will stop the clock at the beginning of the question from the hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard while we fix these technical problems.

I am told that the simultaneous interpretation is now working. The hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard has the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** Mr. Chair, I want to know if there is actually any negotiations between Canada and the United States concerning the delimitation of the Canadian maritime zones in the Beaufort Sea?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, the short answer for the hon. member is that issue is not active right now. Canada and the United States have different perspectives on that issue, and there is no current process underway to deal with it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Before I recognize the hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, I need him to know that we did turn back the clock because of these technical problems. However, there is still only three minutes left to the 15 minute block that belonged to the official opposition.

The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore has the floor.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, could the minister say with certainty that since detainee transfers have been resumed to Afghan authorities recently, no Afghan detainees have been tortured?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, my first day on the job I received a very thorough briefing from officials who assured me that the system for tracking and monitoring detainees had been dramatically enhanced. The reporting of their well-being and visits are now approximately weekly. I have asked that a report be given to me on a timely basis so I can be assured, at all times, that there are no situations that should not be occurring.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Chair, does the minister continue to have confidence in the governor of Kandahar? Does he believe that Afghan official is part of the problem or part of the solution in respect to the matter about which I just asked him a question?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, we have confidence in the government of Afghanistan. We will certainly be working with it and supporting it in the pursuit of its legitimate democratic governance.

This is an issue and an appointment that is really in the hands of the government of Afghanistan, not in the hands of Canada.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Chair, given that Taliban forces cross freely back and forth across the Durand Line, which they do not recognize given that there is a rear operating base for the Taliban in Pakistan, what practical diplomatic steps is Canada taking to engage with the Pakistanis to deal with that issue and reduce the threat to our soldiers?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, through DFAIT, we have been working with senior officials in both Afghanistan and Pakistan to bring border officials together into dialogue so they can begin to work together in constructive monitoring and policing of the border.

That is one very important part of diplomacy. Of course, there are many more—

**The Deputy Chair:** It is with regret that I must interrupt the hon. member. There are 15 seconds left for the last question from the hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Chair, could the minister tell us if there are any diplomatic negotiations of any kind, at any level, with the Taliban?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Not directly, Mr. Chair. We, again, rely on such initiatives as the government of Afghanistan chooses to undertake with respect to coalition building.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Chair:** The next block of time belongs to the government and I recognize the hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages and Minister for La Francophonie.

• (2030)

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak about the international Francophonie. I would like to acknowledge my CIDA colleague, since her department is also very involved in la Francophonie, along with my department, Canadian Heritage.

When I was Minister for La Francophonie, we accomplished a number of things. In the first weeks, I went to Paris to meet with His Excellency Abdou Diouf, Secretary General of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. There, I announced that Canada would make a direct contribution of \$900,000 to support institution building and the modernization of the OIF. It was important for Canada to modernize the OIF and make it more transparent and efficient.

A few months later, Canada had the honour of hosting the ministerial conference of la Francophonie on conflict prevention and human security in Saint-Boniface, Manitoba. We had the pleasure of welcoming Mr. Diouf at the conference. More specifically, it was an opportunity for Canada to demonstrate the richness of our Canadian francophonie to the visiting international leaders of la Francophonie.

I also attended the Sommet de la Francophonie in September 2006, in Bucharest, Romania, along with the Prime Minister.

I would also like to point out the work that the member for Beauce has done on Francophonie issues in recent months.

Today I am going to talk about the international institution known as la Francophonie.

When we talk about la Francophonie, we first have to talk about the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, which is known by the acronym OIF, and about all of the agencies, decision-making bodies, ministerial conferences and operators surrounding it.

### *Business of Supply*

First and foremost, la Francophonie is an idea, we could say an ideal, that originated in the early 1960s, at a time when the great architecture of the United Nations had been put in place. The UN programs had not yet hit their stride, the international community recognized the need for a kind of Marshall Plan on a global scale, and decolonization, particularly in Africa, was underway. The idea was an ambitious one: to take advantage of a common language to build bonds of cooperation and strengthen natural affinities.

The spirit behind la Francophonie is a desire to cooperate and to discuss contemporary problems.

Within la Francophonie, there has been a process of evolution that has produced an amalgam of institutions, which vary in their specialization and the autonomy they enjoy. The oldest of them is the Conference of Ministers of Education of Countries Using French as a Common Language, CONFEMEN. It was created in 1960 and its purpose is to encourage dialogue, cooperation and coordination in the area of education policies and to conduct high-level discussions about the future of education.

In 1961, the Association des universités partiellement ou entièrement de langue française was created in Montreal, and it has since become the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie. Today it has a membership of 659 institutions in 60 countries.

In 1967, the Association internationale des parlementaires de langue française was created, and today it is known as the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

A second permanent ministerial conference was established in 1969: the Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers of Countries sharing the use of French, CONFESJES.

And last, in 1970, at the impetus of the Presidents of Tunisia, Niger and Senegal, an intergovernmental institution for la Francophonie was established, with a broader mandate: the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation. It has served to provide more structure for international Francophonie, and over the years it has adapted to the needs of the member countries. It is now called the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie.

La Francophonie has continued to build on those foundations.

The mayors of Paris and Quebec City started the International Association of Francophone Mayors. Other institutions that have been created are la Francophone Business Forum, the Games of La Francophonie, the Energy and Environmental Institute, Senghor University in Alexandria and the international television network, TV5.

The first summit of heads of state and government of la Francophonie was held in Paris in 1986. Canada eagerly hosted the second summit in Quebec City in 1987, and we continue to act as host country on a fairly regular basis.

● (2035)

In 1999, the summit was held in Moncton and we are preparing to receive, once again, the heads of state and of government in Quebec City in the fall of 2008.

La Francophonie is one of the only international intergovernmental entities where the Canadian provinces can have a seat. In the

early 1970s, the Government of Canada concluded an agreement with Quebec on its participation in la Francophonie events. The same agreement was later reached with New Brunswick. These two provinces have government participant status, sit in on the proceedings, make their own financial contributions and bring with them real expertise on issues in their own jurisdictions.

I have a few more words about la Francophonie: the OIF today has 53 member states and governments, two associate states and 13 observer states, from five continents, that are united by the French language. It is a forum where Canada has some clout and influence. We are the second largest provider of funds after France, with a contribution of more than \$40 million a year. Some \$19 million comes from the Department of Foreign Affairs. The rest essentially comes from CIDA and Canadian Heritage.

Our participation in la Francophonie reflects the linguistic duality of our country and our attachment to cultural diversity and the values of solidarity. It is the multilateral forum of choice for promoting the major objectives of Canada's foreign policy and we have strongly encouraged la Francophonie to become more political. The OIF has answered that call and is now taking political action in line with its four fundamental missions: to promote the French language and cultural and linguistic diversity; to promote peace, democracy and human rights; to support education, training, higher learning and research; and to develop cooperation for sustainable development and solidarity.

Canada can have its voice heard on issues like security, the rule of law, good governance, human rights and development.

We will continue to contribute to the institutional reform of la Francophonie and to encourage the organization to have clear objectives and a structure that maximizes its effectiveness. The OIF's good governance depends on its people. We have complete confidence in the current secretary general, His Excellency, Abdou Diouf, former president of Senegal, and in the OIF administrator—the secretary general's right-hand man—Clément Duhaime, a Canadian.

We are also very proud of the progress that has been made in regard to the TV5 Monde international television network. As the chair of the conference of ministers responsible for TV5 Monde, I had the pleasure of announcing that discussions among senior officials from the partner governments have led to the development of a draft agreement that preserves the multilateral, pluralistic nature of TV5 Monde. This network plays a major role in promoting the culture and values of la Francophonie and must remain a joint project of this international organization.

Discussions among the partner governments have always been held in an excellent climate of cooperation and collaboration. In addition, the Prime Minister and the President of France addressed the future of TV5, among other things, during their discussions last May 27.

This will be the 12th time that the heads of state and government of la Francophonie have met. This time the summit will be held in Quebec City from October 17 to 19, 2008.

The governments of Canada and Quebec are the co-hosts and Canada will chair the summit.

We have been working very closely with our partners—both the participating provinces and the other member countries—to deliver a summit worthy of the name. Four issues—broken down into sub-topics—have been selected. The first is democracy and la Francophonie, including preventive diplomacy and strengthening of the organization's mediation capacities, as well as democratic life. The second is the environment, where we will emphasize water and sustainable forest management. The third concerns economic governance, including the principles of transparency and corporate social responsibility. Finally, the fourth is the French language, which is at the heart of la Francophonie.

The preparations are proceeding well. An organizational secretariat has been established in Quebec City and started its technical and logistical work in September 2007, in accordance with federal management guidelines.

• (2040)

The governments of Canada and Quebec have each contributed \$16 million to the organization of the summit and New Brunswick has contributed \$750,000. In addition, the federal government is responsible for the full cost of security, which brings its total contribution to more than \$57 million.

In recent months, organizing the summit has provided many opportunities to strengthen cooperation between Ottawa and Quebec City. At last November's ministerial conference in Vientiane, Canada assumed the presidency of the ministerial conference of la Francophonie.

We should not forget what we are doing for the French language here in our own country. On March 20, the International Day of La Francophonie, I announced financial assistance for the cross-country tour of Francoforce, which will run from May 30 to September 2, 2008. Funding of \$1.1 million will help the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française coordinate this major tour, in close cooperation with the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada.

In March, our government announced financial assistance for various major projects in minority language communities in New Brunswick. Ten francophone organizations shared \$946,100 to carry out activities promoting the vitality of francophone and Acadian communities in New Brunswick and linguistic duality throughout Canada. In addition, we announced \$714,970 in financial support for seven organizations working with francophone communities in Alberta.

The summit will take place in five months' time. We are working on fine-tuning the objectives, further developing the themes and identifying our commitments and areas for follow-up. One thing is certain: the action taken will be effective and will result in tangible outcomes. We are counting on all Canadians, including parliamentarians, to ensure the success of the summit. I know that we will pull off a remarkable event that we will all be proud of.

**The Deputy Chair:** The government has two and a half of its 15 minutes left.

The member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean.

**Mr. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

### *Business of Supply*

Madam Minister, thank you once again for that very useful information about the international Francophonie. I would especially like to thank you for telling us about the preparations you have made together with the Prime Minister's Office to ensure that the next Sommet de la Francophonie goes well. Of course, much more could be said about this international forum that has been so important to us for so many years. I would therefore like to take advantage of this opportunity to ask you for more information about it.

For example, we all know that Quebec is also an active member of the international Francophonie. Such situations are rare, and deserve an explanation. Can you tell us more about this? How and why did this come about? Also, can you tell us how the federal-provincial dynamic works at the international level?

Furthermore, if Canada wants to be an important player on the international stage, and I believe everyone feels the same way about this, we have to belong to major multilateral organizations, such as la Francophonie. But do we not also have an obligation to ensure that our actions on the international stage are as effective as possible? Is it not in our interest to see to it that the performance of the institutions to which we belong and contribute meets certain standards of good governance and management? Where is la Francophonie on that? Are we satisfied? What remains to be done in that regard?

It would certainly be reassuring to know that Canada is still working toward more relevant and effective multilateralism. Madam minister, I will conclude by asking you to tell us how Canada's participation in la Francophonie corresponds—

**The Deputy Chair:** I must interrupt the member, whom I asked to address his questions in the third person and not the second.

The minister has 45 seconds remaining.

**Hon. Josée Verner:** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member for his excellent questions.

The majority of multilateral organizations are composed of member states. La Francophonie is unique in that it admits participating governments. Quebec has this status, as does New Brunswick, and there are other examples. There is a spot for Belgium, as well as Belgium's French community.

This is a unique formula that applies only to la Francophonie, and it works. Canada brings more experience to the table and puts forward ideas that would otherwise be absent.

Canada, Quebec and New Brunswick—

• (2045)

**The Deputy Chair:** I am sorry to have to interrupt the hon. minister, but time has run out.

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup now has 15 minutes.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I will begin by expressing my hopes that the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, if that will be his permanent position, will have the opportunity to put an end to the darkest period in the history of Canadian foreign affairs since I became a member. I have been a member in this House for 15 years and I have never seen a darker period than this one, ever since the Conservatives came to power.

Basically, the messenger was a greenhorn and not competent for the task, but the person responsible for his appointment was the Prime Minister of Canada, who sacrificed the people of Beauce in the interest of votes. That said, I hope that, from now on, we will have clear signs of the Conservatives' change of direction. The first thing I would like to ask the minister has to do with the millennium goals.

At present, only 0.29% of our gross domestic product is allocated to international aid, while the millennium goal is 0.7%. Considering the wealth of our society, how is it that the Conservative government has not taken action on this?

Based on our performance so far, we will not reach our objective until 2032. We often treat those who are most in need around the globe pretty much the same as people here at home. The government is currently adopting the same attitude towards international aid that it does towards employment insurance.

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Chair, let me say that the millennium development goals are an agreed to international set of goals. We are approximately halfway through the time period of achieving those goals. The international community is now reviewing and measuring its success and moving forward on other goals. I know that through the many international conferences and meetings that I have attended.

We also have tried to ensure that for those we seem to be able to achieve, we are going to continue our efforts internationally together to meet those goals. In other cases where circumstances have created difficulties, we are also doing an assessment as part of the international group. I have asked that Canada be assured of playing a full role in the assessment.

We have always consistently increased our international assistance resources. In fact, our levels of international assistance will be doubled. It will reach \$5 billion in 2010-11. However, as I said earlier, it is not just a matter of the dollar figure. It is how those dollars are being used. It is making sure that children who get enrolled in school are actually going to become literate and have the numerical and arithmetical skills they are going to need to be functioning adults.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Chair, the fact remains that it will take Canada until 2032 to meet its international goals. It will take until 2032, and this is 2008. It will therefore take 24 years, even though we are a very wealthy country.

On another note, I would like to talk about Omar Khadr. This Canadian national was taken prisoner in Afghanistan when he was just 15. Canada has not demanded that he be returned here, even

though the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that Canada do so because Mr. Khadr is being held illegally. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that his detention is illegal.

Will the government finally promise to demand that the United States return Omar Khadr to Canada?

[*English*]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, Mr. Khadr faces very serious charges in relation to being captured in Afghanistan. In fact, the charges include murder in violation of the laws of war, attempted murder in violation of the laws of war, conspiracy, providing materials for terrorism, and spying.

The Government of Canada has sought and received assurances that Mr. Khadr is being treated humanely. Departmental officials have carried out several welfare visits with Mr. Khadr and will continue to do so. Any questions regarding whether Canada plans to ask for the release of Mr. Omar Khadr are premature and speculative, as the legal process and appeals are still going on.

● (2050)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Chair, I understand that Canada will continue to flout the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There is therefore no change in that regard.

Many Canadian extractive companies working overseas regularly ignore locals' human rights. Yet the government has never acted on the report of the advisory group on the national round tables on corporate social responsibility and the Canadian extractive industry in developing countries.

When will the government act on the recommendations in this report? The government has had the report for several months.

[*English*]

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his kind comments.

The corporate social responsibility review that was undertaken by the Government of Canada round tables on the extractive sector report is indeed in my area. We have undertaken an extensive review of that report. We are getting close to what we believe will be a robust approach to corporate social responsibility. I think the hon. member will be pleased.

In the meantime, we have a series of international guidelines under the OECD, the G-8 and the United Nations to deal with a number of aspects of corporate social responsibility.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Chair, our relationship with the Americans is not always an easy one. Recently, the Americans included an addendum in the farm bill that complicates the softwood lumber issue. It has extremely negative effects, and there will be still more to come. Canada signed the softwood lumber agreement. Producers got refunds, and the Bloc supported that measure.

Now, will the Minister of Foreign Affairs act so that his government intervenes quickly to ensure as soon as possible that this addendum does not apply? The forestry industry in Quebec and Canada has enough problems already.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Hon. David Emerson:** Yes, Mr. Chair, we have been intervening with the U.S. administration. Our ambassador has intervened. I have intervened directly with the U.S. trade representative.

It is Congress. The president, as the hon. member knows, has vetoed the bill. It is to be voted on again. We believe that this particular monitoring system for softwood lumber is in contravention of the softwood lumber agreement. We will be pursuing vigorously both diplomatic and legal alternatives to deal with this issue.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Chair, I think I am starting to detect a difference in the way the new minister responds compared to others today. There may be some hope. I hope his hands will not be tied by the attitudes we have seen in the past.

Let us talk about the free trade agreement with some of the European countries that the Bloc supported. There is one essential condition for this to work. Canada needs to have a very firm shipbuilding policy. Fifteen years is enough time to adjust. Nonetheless, will the Government of Canada submit a shipbuilding policy to ensure that we made the right choice in supporting this agreement because we will have given our shipbuilding industry a chance to meet the challenges within the deadlines outlined in the agreement?

[English]

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, we absolutely are going to have a dynamic and robust shipbuilding industry. The EFTA trade agreement provides a 10 year to 15 year phase-out on the most sensitive shipbuilding products and services. That is the longest phase-out of any trade agreement in our history.

We also have applied new funding to the structured financing facility, which supports the Canadian shipbuilding industry.

However, the really big opportunity for Canadian shipbuilding is the government procurement policy. We have excluded government Canadian build policies from the agreement, and this \$8 billion-plus in Canadian ship and vessel acquisition is going to keep the Canadian shipyards busy for a long time.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left?

**The Deputy Chair:** There are five and a half minutes left.

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the Minister for La Francophonie a question. I am not sure if this question should be addressed to her specifically, but there is an important link.

We all know how anxious the Inter-Parliamentary Union is to hold its assembly in Quebec City in 2010. The government, in the beginning, was adamant that the organization had to change its internal rules, meaning that the rule allowing all of the parliamentarians to attend the assembly would not be respected. Following our repeated questioning, we received indications in this House that the government was working to soften its position.

Can we be guaranteed that real efforts are being made for this to happen? I am asking this question of the Minister for La Francophonie because the fact that this assembly could be held in

Quebec City—with the global impact it would have—means it would be important that during the Sommet de la Francophonie this fall, which coincides in terms of dates, it be confirmed that the Inter-Parliamentary assembly will take place in Quebec City in 2010.

● (2055)

**Hon. Josée Verner:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his interest. As a minister from the Quebec City area, I am very much in favour of hosting all of these big international events in our region for many reasons.

The member was wondering if this was part of my portfolio, and the answer is no. I know that my colleague from Citizenship and Immigration is working very hard on this. She has had many opportunities to speak about this in the House. She has every intention of working diligently with the people from her department on this file.

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Chair, I want to come back to Canada's most important international relationship, its relationship with the United States of America.

In recent years, the situation has been quite unusual: our close alignment with the Bush administration has been rather unacceptable. Now, the American government's conduct is—

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Chair, I would appreciate it if the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development would listen when we are speaking. It is rather difficult to speak while he is shouting.

I would like to speak of our relations with the Americans. The security and prosperity partnership will be one of the areas where I will be able to definitely judge whether or not the Canadian government changes its attitude.

These negotiations are currently being conducted in private, in secret. There is no point in reaching any agreement among these three countries unless the citizens observe them. If not the agreements are pointless. We know that the issue of job losses in the United States is presently being linked to free trade even though this should not be the case. We have to deal with the perceptions and that will be accomplished by adopting a more open attitude.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us if he is going to change his approach and drop the secrecy adopted at Montebello in particular? The government should have an open approach enabling citizens to be engaged in the negotiations. In this way, the relationship between Canada, the United States and Mexico will be centred on bettering the future of North America, particularly with respect to competition with the rest of the world, emerging countries and China in particular.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, the security prosperity initiative was started, as members know, by the previous Liberal government. I was actually part of it. It was a very good idea at the time. There was a recognition that trade relations across the Canada-U.S. border were increasingly defined by a number of very small regulatory anomalies and impediments.

The whole idea was to begin to address the thickening of the border. This government has actually pursued that vigorously and with greater focus. It has identified five areas where we think very meaningful progress can be made that should assist in dealing with that border-thickening problem.

**The Deputy Chair:** The next block of time belongs to the government. I recognize the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Chair, it is a great pleasure for me to rise in the House today to speak about Canada's engagement with Africa as well as our pursuit of opportunities in the emerging Asian markets.

Asia is a key focus of our efforts under our global commerce strategy. Our plan is to help Canadian businesses and investors benefit from everything the global economy has to offer.

Today, I would like to outline how our strategy is helping us pursue and build new opportunities in Asia. There is a staggering diversity of opportunity for our businesses and investors to succeed in the Asian markets, especially on the investment front.

Vietnam, for instance, is a growing and dynamic market for Canadian investors. In 2006, the stock of Canadian direct investment in Vietnam was \$142 million, an almost 60% increase in one year, with more large projects planned, particularly in the natural resources sector.

To help continue forging these links, Canada is launching a new chapter in our bilateral investment relationship through the negotiation of a foreign investment protection and promotion agreement.

Our goal is a high quality agreement that will enhance the Canadian investment community and our bilateral commercial links with Vietnam.

Indonesia is another important investment destination, ranking fourth in Asia, with a stock of \$3.12 billion worth of Canadian investment. Canadian and Indonesian officials have held two rounds of exploratory discussions so far toward a FIPA, and we plan to hold the first round of negotiations shortly.

Turning to Singapore, Canadian negotiators are continuing to push for a bilateral free trade agreement. As pointed out in our report, Singapore is a commercial business hub and springboard into Southeast Asian value chains.

Building more commercial links to Singapore through a free trade agreement, for example, would greatly enhance Canada's profile

across the region and bring many benefits to Canadian businesses, particularly in the areas of investment and services.

China is another top priority of our commercial efforts. Over the years we have built a strong and sophisticated commercial relationship with China. Indeed, not long ago, both the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Natural Resources visited China to reinforce this.

A comprehensive market plan has been developed in cooperation with Canada's business community to continue making connections between Canadian expertise and Chinese demand in a number of sectors. We are planning to add more trade commissioners in China to give our businesses the support they need to outdo their competitors and capture opportunities in a number of key sectors.

Our global commerce strategy also places a key focus on driving more two-way investment between our countries.

Now, I would like to turn to India. Canada and India have long been partners on the world stage. As I observed during my visit to India earlier this year, Canada and India share common values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It is vital that Canada maintain a strong relationship with India, the world's largest democracy and an increasingly important international partner.

This partnership extends into the commercial realm where our nations have built a sophisticated business relationship that saw our two-way trade reach an all-time record high last year.

Like China, we have developed a targeted market plan for India that emphasizes opportunities in key sectors, including agriculture, oil and gas, electric power, aerospace, information and communications technology, infrastructure and service industries. Canada has a proven expertise in all of these areas and can help India as it continues its economic ascent. Two-way investment is another hallmark of the Canada-India relationship.

Last year, we concluded negotiations toward a Canada-India foreign promotion and protection agreement that will give investors in both countries the access and protection they need in each of our markets. At this point I would like to emphasize that it was the current Minister of Foreign Affairs who was instrumental in signing this agreement.

Since the signing of the Canada-India science and technology cooperation agreement in 2005, researchers from both countries have been working together to develop and commercialize tomorrow's technological breakthroughs. We also recognize the importance of a strong Canadian presence in the Indian marketplace.

*Business of Supply*

• (2100)

We currently have commercial representation in five Indian cities and our Prime Minister recently announced the opening of two new trade offices in Hyderabad and Kolkata, formerly known as Calcutta, as well as additional commercial staff to our missions in Mumbai and New Delhi. An expanded presence in India will allow Canada to create even more commercial connections between our two nations and create wealth, prosperity and opportunity for both countries.

Finally, we cannot talk about our efforts in capturing more business in Asia without talking about the Asia-Pacific gateway and the corridor initiative. The initiative is a bold visionary project to boost our west coast transportation infrastructure capabilities and to create the premier gateway of choice between Asia and North America.

With our partners in the provinces and the private sector, we are making an unprecedented effort to boost our transportation and logistics systems and establish new links between North America and the Asian giants.

We are seeing solid progress with the recent opening of the new expanded Fairview Container Terminal at the port of Prince Rupert, giving it a significant advantage over key American ports. The gateway project is yet another example of Canada's commitment to our Asian partners and of our clear focus on creating two-way supply chains that will drive trade between our countries into the future.

I would now like to turn to Africa. I would like to talk about Canada's long history of dedicated commitment to Africa. Both in Canada and Africa, Canadians have worked for and with Africans to alleviate suffering and improve lives.

Today, many Canadians, and this includes a growing African diaspora, maintain this commitment. They are involved through family ties, churches, mosques, schools, and cultural and community organizations.

In spite of the often large negative impression the news headlines leave, Africa has made real progress compared with a decade ago with more reform-minded democratic leaders taking responsibility; more prudent economic management with GDP growth up and inflation down; fewer conflicts, six ended in the past 10 years; and more democratic elections, 45 elections in sub-Saharan Africa in the past five years, of which two-thirds were deemed free and fair.

However, social, economic and health challenges remain immense. Serious conflict and governance problems persist. The progress achieved is fragile and must be sustained.

The government has pursued a focused and principled approach in sub-Saharan Africa. Our values are those all Canadians cherish: freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Our interests comprise major aid commitments, growing trade and investments, and dealing with key regional security risks.

At this time I would also like to acknowledge the hard work the Minister of International Cooperation has done in promoting the Africa agenda where she has made a difference and she is fighting for effective aid delivery.

Canada is meeting its commitments to Africa. We are doubling annual aid to Africa from 2003-04 to 2008-09 to \$2.1 billion. We will meet this objective.

Last December, the Minister of Finance announced a \$1.3 billion contribution over three years to the World Bank's International Development Association. This represents a 25% increase in Canada's contribution. About half of these funds will go to Africa.

Last year the Minister of International Cooperation announced nearly \$400 million for development in Africa. This includes our contribution to the African Development Bank.

Canada is already obtaining better results and making a difference, especially in countries where we have a long term, well established aid partnership. We continue to make progress in poverty reduction, health and education, democratic governance, and peace and security.

For example, Ghana is on track to halve extreme poverty by 2015, thereby meeting a key millennium development goal.

Earlier this year I visited Sudan where our government announced a new Canadian investment of up to \$275 million in security, diplomacy and aid initiatives, as was just announced by the Minister of Foreign Affairs for our commitment to Sudan.

Canada has played a leadership role in supporting international efforts to establish sustainable peace and long term stability in Sudan. We remain committed to those goals. All parties continue to work toward building the culture of peace and stability throughout the country and to support sustained efforts to do so.

Since we are on topic of aid, let me say that we know we must also make our aid more effective and improve results. The government will do this by bringing more focus, more efficiency, and more accountability to our programs.

The government has focused attention on the regional dimension of these issues. We are helping Africans to build and strengthen their security architecture.

• (2105)

We support the African Union and other regional institutions, such as the Economic Community of West African States through capacity building and peace support programs and peacekeeping operations. This will enhance the ability of Africans to resolve conflict, improve regional stability and protect civilians.

In conclusion, Canada's global commerce strategy is squarely focused on capturing opportunities, both in the most exciting global market as well as working to ensure that Canada is there standing for Africa.

*Business of Supply*

• (2110)

**The Deputy Chair:** The block of time allowed to the government was 15 minutes. There are now four and a half minutes left.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt has the floor.

**Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I appreciated the parliamentary secretary's remarks. I would particularly like to return to his references to the continent of Africa.

As he rightfully noted, the continent has made some progress of which I think all people of the world are quite happy for. But there are still challenges and there are still difficulties involved in Africa.

There have been a number of conflicts and while some of them have successfully progressed, I think particularly of the situations in the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi and the Ivory Coast. They have all progressed in a positive way, but there are other situations that continue to concern me and concern other Canadians who have an interest in the welfare of the people of Africa.

In particular, let me note a few of the countries and perhaps the parliamentary secretary can respond in each situation on what the government's response has been. I think particularly of the Sudan and the humanitarian situation there, the ongoing violence. I know the UN and the African Union are involved there.

There is the situation in northern Uganda with the fanatical Lord's Resistance Army still causing a major disruption.

In Somalia, again, there is still an ongoing problem internally with its long problems of political, humanitarian and other forms of unrest.

More recently, we have seen problems in Zimbabwe and Kenya. In Zimbabwe it has been with the current election turbulence and the economic collapse in the country. Kenya, long regarded as one of the pillars of Africa, has gone through an election situation that has been somewhat stressful. Hopefully, it has moved to a positive resolution.

I would appreciate the parliamentary secretary's response on what the government is doing to assist in these countries.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, in reference to Sudan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has listed what Canada was doing to help Sudan. However, both the former minister of foreign affairs and I travelled to Khartoum earlier this year and both of us saw firsthand the work that is needed to be done. I am very glad and proud of Canada's commitment which is working toward peace in Sudan.

In reference to the peace process in Uganda, during the visit by the former foreign affairs minister and myself, we met with the chief mediator of the northern Uganda peace process. The minister emphasized the need for the Lord's Resistance Army to sign and to begin implementing the final peace agreement without further delay. Canada has contributed \$8 million, including \$3.5 million toward the peace process.

Since 2006, Canada has provided over \$19 million in support of humanitarian operations for Somalia, as well as \$4.5 million in support of regional refugee operations.

Insofar Zimbabwe is concerned, the government and myself, the former minister and now the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, we

have all stated quite clearly that we are concerned about Zimbabwe. We want to see peace brought quickly. We are calling for free and transparent elections in Zimbabwe. Canada's assistance to Zimbabwe during 2006-07 amounted to \$11.6 million.

I visited Kenya during the month of March to emphasize Canada's support for the political settlement and encouraged parties to implement fully the provisions of the accord. I am happy to say that the accord is now working.

**The Deputy Chair:** There are about 50 seconds left to the government's block of time.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, I would like to acknowledge once more the hard work the Minister of International Cooperation has done on the Africa file, as well as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I want to give them credit for taking this file and moving it forward.

**The Deputy Chair:** The next block of time belongs to the official opposition. The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca has the floor.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with the very fine members of Parliament for Winnipeg South Centre and Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

My first question concerns the fact that the United States has been blocking efforts to negotiate an international ban on cluster munitions. I would simply like to ask the minister whether or not his government supports an international ban on the production and use of cluster munitions, yes or no?

• (2115)

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, as the hon. member knows, Canada has been involved deeply in the Oslo process, culminating in a big negotiating session in Dublin. A text was arrived at that appears to be a balanced reasonable text. I think 103 countries were there. There was a lot of give and take from all sides. Clearly, we would all like to see more countries buying in.

**The Deputy Chair:** It is with regret that I must interrupt the hon. minister. The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca has the floor.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** I will assume that is a yes, Mr. Chair.

The United Nations Department of Security and Safety has said that the area of control by the Taliban in Afghanistan is actually increasing rather than decreasing. Would the minister agree with that assessment?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, there are a number of different perspectives to take on security in Afghanistan. If we are talking about security in the eyes of, let us say, the United Nations or several civilians doing development work, we have one perspective on security. If we talk to the military, we have quite another. It is a very fluid situation.

Our approach at the moment is to make sure that our focus on security is around creating—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Mr. Chair, our troops are doing an extraordinary job in Kandahar. I have a simple question for the Minister of International Cooperation. Can she tell us how many schools and how many clinics CIDA has actually built and made operative in the last year in Kandahar?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Chair, I can provide some facts. On the education part, in Kandahar specifically by supporting the government's education quality improvement project, EQUIP, the goal is to construct or rehabilitate 51 schools, 19 of which are under way presently.

Through the literacy program, there are 5,200 students attending literacy programs throughout Kandahar. With Save the Children and the Netherlands we are also supporting increased—

**The Deputy Chair:** It is with regret that I must interrupt the hon. minister. The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca in his third of the 15 minute block.

**Mr. Gary Goodyear:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, my apologies for interrupting the procedures. I am completely aware of the rules, but clearly we are here to hear the facts from the ministers and I would ask for unanimous consent for the minister to finish her answer.

**The Deputy Chair:** I thank the hon. member for Cambridge for his good advice. I had already allowed the minister a multiple amount of time than it took for the question.

We seem to be rolling pretty well right now and I would just like to leave it at that for now, if we could. There is not a lot of time left to the hon. member, unless he wants to encroach on his successor's time.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** I assume though, Mr. Chair, that that time was not taken out of the initial time.

**The Deputy Chair:** No, it was not.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Am I taking time out of my colleague's time?

**The Deputy Chair:** Right now you are on your own time. I will signal.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Mr. Chair, we cannot have a foreign policy unless our diplomats are working abroad. DAC assessments show that we are at the bottom of the barrel of the G-8 countries in terms of the percentage of our diplomats working abroad.

Is there a management plan to reverse this trend and ensure that our diplomats are going to be abroad in the field where they can do their job representing our country? Does he have a specific management plan with targets?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, the answer is yes. Earlier, one of the members mentioned a strategic review. Part of that strategic review involves a plan for the department which will result in our moving from a world where we have one and a half people abroad for every one in Canada to a goal of two people abroad for every one here in Canada.

We will be staffing up quite significantly in a number of priority spots around the world as well. We will be changing the complexion of the people that we are retaining and putting out in the field, because the nature of the trade game has changed very fundamentally in the last five or ten years.

• (2120)

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, in your opening remarks, Minister, you spoke about principles being connected with interest. I am wondering if you could comment.

Canada was only one of four countries to vote against the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The minister knows that his government's opposition to the declaration came in spite of recommendations to support it from three departments: the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, the Department of National Defence, and your own department.

I wonder if you could tell me how you justify the government's opposition to the declaration.

**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. Chair, of course our government's position on the matter in relation to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is quite principled. In particular, article 26 of the declaration calls for all traditional lands to be returned to indigenous peoples. In Canada, we have had over 200 years of negotiated settlements with indigenous people. This actually runs in direct contrast to all that we have settled throughout our history and we feel that this declaration would run against everything that Canada has negotiated.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Chair, the declaration came after two decades of negotiation in which Canada played a large role. One hundred and forty-four countries voted for it and four countries voted against it. One hundred and one legal experts in this country have indicated the authenticity of this declaration.

Again, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. How can you justify your government's opposition to this declaration?

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre to note that I want to be even-handed with all members. I beg you not to ask questions in the second person, but only in the third person.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has the floor.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chair, our government is very cognizant of being able to actually fulfill international treaties or declarations. As such, when we analyzed this declaration as written by the United Nations and ratified by other countries, we appreciated the fact that what we had accomplished in our country over the years would be unravelled by this declaration. As such, we could not take on that international obligation. It would not be something we would be able to fulfill, unlike her previous government which was happy to do that on many declarations.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Chair, that is in spite of 101 legal experts in this country.

Canada has continued to play mischief and has continued its defensive campaign against the rights of indigenous people both in Canada and around the world by maintaining its rejection of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the starting point or minimum outcome for further negotiations on the OAS Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

*Business of Supply*

How can the government defend cherry-picking which human rights standards and instruments it will respect when doing so violates the rule of law in Canada and threatens the stability of the international human rights system?

• (2125)

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chair, the member mentioned human rights. Of course, she will note that 30 years ago when the Canadian Human Rights Act was first brought into force, there was an exemption for first nations communities. After 30 years, no government was able to repeal that exemption, except for this government. This government was the first to extend human rights to first nations people.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Again, Mr. Chair, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Is it the minister's view that indigenous collective rights are not human rights? This appears to be the view of his government, even though the Human Rights Council and other international and regional bodies regularly consider indigenous collective rights under their respective human rights mandates.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Chair, in Canada we have a Constitution that recognizes a number of indigenous rights. This is something which is, for the most part, unparalleled in the world. This is one of the biggest reasons that we felt, in relation to article 26 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we would not be able to fulfill our obligations to it, because we have these rights already built into our Constitution and we do not want to unravel that.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Chair, the Manley report was highly critical of the lack of transparency and accountability in the government's presentation of the mission to the Canadian people.

What specific steps is his department going to undertake to correct that situation and respond to the criticism in the Manley report?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, I will have to move very quickly.

Clearly, we have a cabinet committee right now reviewing the plans and strategies for Afghanistan. There is a parliamentary committee, of which the hon. member is a member. We will be presenting quarterly reports to Parliament. We will have a communications strategy in Afghanistan to communicate with the people in Afghanistan. We will have a communications strategy here in Canada to convey a sense to Canadians as to what the important objectives are for the people of Afghanistan. We will have a diplomatic strategy to ensure—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Chair, there have been recurrent criticisms of the corruption of the Karzai government. It is even said that the corruption of the Karzai government is eroding the political strategies the government needs to succeed in our mission in Afghanistan.

What specific measures is his department and the officials in Afghanistan taking to engage with the Karzai government on the corruption issue? That is the first question.

The second question is for the Minister of International Cooperation.

What specific measures is her department taking to ensure that Canadian funds for development in Afghanistan are not misappropriated?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, we are very active. I know the ambassador was before the committee, I think it was yesterday. We have been diplomatically very active with the Afghanistan government. We have been very concerned about the corruption issue. As the member knows, weeding out corruption is very difficult. It is a long term proposition. Some of the specific initiatives include assisting to ensure that, for example, the pay for the Afghan national police is competitive and does not leave them so dependent on corrupt practices. There is also the training of public servants, the professionalization of the public service—

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Chair, may I ask the Minister of International Cooperation to answer the question that I asked in respect of how her department can guarantee that funds spent in development projects are not systematically misappropriated by Afghan and other authorities.

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Chair, actually, the accountability assessment is done on three levels: at the country level, the program level and the project level.

In fact, we are guided by the Afghanistan Compact. We are working with organizations. There are assurances that we do the risk and result management accountability framework, which has been tabled with the Treasury Board Secretariat. We do it through organizations. Even though it may be supporting the Government of Afghanistan's programming and plans, we do it through trust funds and multilateral organizations.

• (2130)

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore has the floor.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Chair, what specifically has the Government of Canada told the Karzai government about the 2011 deadline? Is the Karzai government clearly aware that the military mission in Canada will end, or has it been led to believe we might be there for longer?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, I think the Government of Canada has been very transparent and very clear that the military mission will end in 2011. There are communications going on at a variety of levels, ministerial, first ministerial. Officials have been over there communicating our thinking on the evolution of our role there. The role of the military is scheduled to change as the Americans and others move in, in disproportionately large numbers.

I do not think there is any mystery at all as to what Canada's plans are.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Chair, can the minister tell the House to what degree the targets being set for training the Afghan army are being met?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, we are in early days. The military has achieved the training of something like 35,000 security people in Afghanistan, but we have a long way to go. We are putting a strategy in place for getting that done and for measuring progress across that and many other areas as we move to 2011.

**The Deputy Chair:** The next block of time for 15 minutes belongs to the government. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and to the Minister of International Trade has the floor.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Chair, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, it is certainly a privilege to rise in the House today to talk for a few minutes about the implementation of our global commerce strategy and how it will help Canadian companies and investors succeed and thrive in the global economy.

A few weeks ago, the hon. Minister of International Trade tabled in the House legislation to enact Canada's first free trade agreement since 2001, an agreement with the European Free Trade Association nations of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. It is an important agreement for Canada, one that gives our businesses competitive terms of access in these important markets and a new link in the growing network of European supply chains.

Just today, we signed a free trade agreement with Peru, an economic leader in Latin America. This new agreement will open new doors for exporters, service providers and investors in this important market.

These agreements are watersheds in Canada's evolving trade strategy. They send a clear signal to the international community that Canada is back in the global commerce game. And they prove that this government is committed to sharpening Canada's competitive positioning in the global economy.

We believe that a strong, aggressive and forward-looking trade and investment strategy is good for Canada. The global economy is evolving and we have to adapt accordingly.

When we talk of trade today, we are talking about "integrative" trade: in other words, the whole range of commercial exchanges that go into creating wealth and prosperity in the global economy. Of course, this includes exports and imports.

It also includes investment, innovation and technology exchanges. These are all part of creating economic opportunity and success.

The level of competition is enormous. Trading nations like ours are facing a competitive landscape like never before, from traditional competitors such as the U.S., Australia and the EU as well as emerging giants such as Russia, Brazil, India and China.

In addition to this fierce competition, we also are facing a range of other challenges, including a high dollar and a slowdown in the U.S. economy. These challenges risk eroding the competitiveness of our

exports, our ability to attract foreign investment and ultimately our ability to participate in global value chains.

It is also a world where governments are competing with governments to support their businesses and investors in the right ways, in the right markets, with the right tools.

That is where our global commerce strategy, led by the hon. Minister of International Trade, comes in. Under "Advantage Canada", this government has demonstrated its commitment to creating a more competitive economy on several fronts.

From reducing red tape and streamlining regulations to an ambitious series of tax cuts, to education, infrastructure and a range of strategic investments and initiatives, steps are being taken to create a more competitive domestic economy.

Our Asia-Pacific gateway and corridor initiative is a good example. It is a bold, visionary effort to boost our west coast transportation infrastructure and create a gateway of choice for shippers and businesses looking for the most efficient link between North America and the Asian marketplaces.

Our global commerce strategy fits squarely into our efforts to create a more globally competitive economy. It flows from our recognition that to be globally competitive our businesses need to be supported in the right markets and, again, with the right tools.

Of course, market access for our businesses and investors will always be a crucial focus of our work. That is why the WTO will be our preferred forum for market access. We will continue working with our partners to push hard for a successful conclusion to the Doha round.

In the meantime, we are stepping up our efforts on the bilateral front, first and foremost as a partner in the enormously successful North American commercial platform. Canada benefits greatly from being part of NAFTA and we are working closely with the U.S. and Mexico on a range of issues to keep trade, investment and talent moving across our borders and ensure that the North American partnership remains strong and prosperous.

● (2135)

This is especially crucial in this day of an economic slowdown in the U.S. South of the border, protectionist voices are growing louder. It is up to all of us who believe in a strong North American platform to remind people that it is a competitive world out there and we need this platform today more than ever.

*Business of Supply*

Thanks to NAFTA, the world looks at North America as an integrated continental marketplace of 440 million people bound together by an ambitious free trade agreement that has created one of the most prosperous commercial platforms anywhere on the planet. We need to support this message with concrete action to make the North American platform more competitive and help all three countries deal with the challenge posed by commercial powerhouses such as China, India and Brazil.

Now is not the time to turn our backs on the platform but indeed to rededicate ourselves to it and make it even more competitive in the years to come. With our American and Mexican partners, that is exactly what we are doing.

We are also getting more aggressive on the bilateral front outside of North America. In addition to the EFTA and Peru agreements, our negotiators are busy with a long list of other negotiations around the world, with Colombia, the Caribbean community, the Dominican Republic, Jordan and South Korea, for instance.

We are engaged in a joint study with the European Union on the cost and benefits of a closer, economic partnership. We are looking to launch negotiations with new EFTA partners.

The results of these efforts should provide our businesses and investors with new links and improved access to new markets, but it is not all about FTAs. We are focused on other kinds of agreements too.

Air services agreements are a good example. We currently have more than 70 in place. Since last January, we have successfully negotiated new or updated existing agreements with nine countries, including Japan, Ireland, Kuwait, Jordan, Iceland, New Zealand, Singapore, Mexico, and Barbados. That sounds like a country and western song, Mr. Chair.

We also recently launched negotiations with the EU toward a comprehensive air transport agreement. This is expected to result in an open skies framework between Canada and all 27 member states, including eight countries where rights currently do not exist at all.

We are also engaging in consultations with a number of key bilateral partners, including the Philippines, South Korea, India, Japan, China and Hong Kong, to continue liberalizing air services.

Investment agreements are another good example of how we can work with our partners to create more opportunities. Canadian firms and investors clearly recognize the importance of investing globally. To support them in these efforts, Canada has 23 foreign investment protection and promotion agreements, or FIPAs, in place with key partners around the world, including, most recently, Peru.

We also have concluded negotiations with India and Jordan. Negotiations are now under way with China, Kuwait and Vietnam and exploratory discussions are being held with a number of countries in Asia and Africa. These agreements will help Canadian firms and investors build their own links in the value and supply chains driving business around the world.

We cannot forget the importance of research, science and technology in a competitive economy. Our recently announced science and technology strategy is helping us to create a more

competitive and dynamic business environment that encourages investment in S and T and innovation.

The strategy also highlights the importance of partnerships with other innovative countries to access foreign knowledge, technologies and expertise in creating marketable products. That is why science and technology cooperation agreements are another focus of our work under the global commerce strategy.

Canada currently has agreements in place with countries such as China and India, which are helping to boost research and develop collaboration and bring new high tech products to market quickly. We are negotiating similar arrangements with Chile and Brazil. These agreements are a great example of how countries can join forces, build off each other's strengths and put exciting innovative products to work on the global stage.

We are also keenly aware of the important role strategic government services can play in helping connect our businesses and investors to global opportunity. For example, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is working closely with Canadian businesses to develop a series of targeted, sector-based market plans for key markets. These plans embrace the full range of international business activities, from exports, imports and investments to science and technology, licensing and the negotiation of market access through trade and investment agreements.

● (2140)

We also enjoy a wide-reaching international commercial network. We currently have about 900 trade commissioners active in over 150 cities around the world, including 13 regional offices across Canada. These dedicated men and women are adapting to new global business models like integrated trade and helping to create new partnerships with nations around the world that will benefit all of our economies.

To support them in these efforts, we are opening new trade offices in the world's most exciting markets, including China, India and Brazil. We are committed to offering the right services in the right markets for Canadian businesses to help them succeed and thrive in the new global economy.

The global commerce strategy is a road map to help our businesses and investors adapt to the complex reality of integrated trade. Through it, we are getting Canada back in the global commerce game. We are sharpening our competitive advantages and helping Canadians create wealth and opportunity in some of the world's most exciting markets.

*Business of Supply*

I respectfully ask for the support of all hon. members as we take more steps to create a competitive and prosperous Canada in the years to come and bolster Canada's solid position as a natural business destination and a partner of choice for international business for years to come.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Chair, it is important for all of us in the House to remember that the best way to help reduce poverty, the best way to fight famine and need and hunger around the world is to provide the fundamentals for a strong economy. That means even allowing people the opportunity to have a job in some of those countries.

As members of the House will know, Canada has made the Americas a priority. The Americas represent a remarkable opportunity for Canada to show its leadership in our own hemisphere and neighbourhood. We have had an unprecedented number of high level visits to the Americas, including our Prime Minister. One reason he went was to help build stronger relationships and ties.

The fruits of our efforts have already been seen. We have completed free trade agreements with Peru. We have launched negotiations with Colombia, the Dominican Republic and with CARICOM. We have increased our development program in the Caribbean.

We are acting on our commitment and Canada is willing to do more.

I know the parliamentary secretary and a group from the trade committee have just returned from the Americas and recently from Colombia and Peru. Would he expand a bit on that trip and the opportunities that he sees being afforded to our country, somewhat because of the trip that they took?

• (2145)

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Chair, as most people in the House will know, our government, our Prime Minister and the Minister of International Trade have taken a serious look at the Americas and a re-engagement with it.

What many people do not realize is the fact that Canadian foreign direct investment in the Americas is worth \$100 billion. That is more money than our trade is worth with China and more money than our trade with India, and it is right on our doorstep. It is a huge opportunity and one that we would be careless not take advantage of and pursue, not only for our own good, but for the good of the other countries in the Americas.

The international trade committee did travel to Colombia. We spent four days in Bogota. When we left there, we went to Panama. I then went on to Honduras and Nicaragua. There are ongoing trade negotiations with the Central America four countries, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala.

I was chagrined to see some of our committee members turn their backs on the opportunities in Colombia. A few years ago Colombia was in dire straits. It was practically a failed nation. Today it is moving forward. It has a growth rate of 7%. There are 1,000 Canadian businesses in Colombia. That is a huge commitment on our part. They show all the corporate social responsibility that Canadian companies are famous for around the world.

**The Deputy Chair:** I am about to recognize the hon. member for Ottawa Centre, who will have noticed so far that debate has gone very well in a depersonalized way, but he has not heard me insist that all questions be addressed in the third person and not in the second person.

He now has the floor.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, in my previous questions to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I had asked whether there had been a strategic overview document produced by the department. This was not about any confidential documents, simply a strategic overview. I want to establish that the minister will in fact make those available to Parliament.

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, as I indicated to the hon. member, a strategic review was done. It was done at the cabinet level with Treasury Board. It was done in a budgetary context.

We have certainly produced a strategy for foreign affairs that will involve reshaping the way we run the business, if I might call it that. It will involve certainly more of our personnel being out in the field. It will involve a principled, values-driven approach to our foreign affairs. It will involve a major trade agenda.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I am asking simply if he will make that available to Parliament.

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, earlier I said that we would provide some material that would enable him to have a reasonable assessment of what we were doing.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I thank him for that.

I would like to move now to questions around what has been called NAFTA-gate. Very simply, was Frank Sensenbrenner was hired by the embassy?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, I believe the issue he is talking about is the investigation that was done by the Clerk of the Privy Council. The Clerk of the Privy Council addressed the questions of the leak of the memo relating to the American presidential campaign to NAFTA. His conclusion was that there was an unduly broad distribution to 232 email addresses of it, of which a number were outside the Government of Canada. That made it difficult to assess what the problem was, but we know the problem was not, as they cleared, the chief of staff to the Prime Minister.

• (2150)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I appreciate the answer, but I asked a different question. I asked whether someone had been hired by the American embassy. The gentleman's name was Frank Sensenbrenner. Was he hired by the American embassy, yes or no?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, the question about the American embassy I guess would have to be directed to the American government.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I stand corrected. I misspoke because I know he was a rather active member of the Republican Party, so I apologize. Was he hired by the Canadian embassy?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Chair, I do not know that this is a day for a discussion of the personnel throughout. I do not see the relationship to the issue he raised of the investigation into the leak of the NAFTA memo. The chief Clerk of the Privy Council did a very extensive investigation into that, and its findings are quite conclusive.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, we now established that the government is not aware of who has been hired at the American embassy.

Maybe we will turn to getting another answer and ask a question. Has the foreign affairs department calculated the cost of repatriating Brenda Martin? Could it give us the dollar amount for that.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, we are extremely delighted that this matter has been successfully resolved and that Brenda Martin is back in Canada. Like all Canadians, we were all worried about her state. She is fine now that she is back in Canada.

As far as the cost is concerned, I will get back to the member in due course with the details.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, regarding the repatriation of foreign citizens, could the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us, where in the main estimates would the costs for repatriation come? In other words, could he tell us what vote line on the actual estimates that cost would come from?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, it is not going to be there explicitly. We are going to have to fish it out of a combination of salary and operating expenses, but we can attempt to extract the data and provide it for the member.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, a Canadian citizen is presently in Sudan. In fact, he is taking refuge in the Canadian embassy in Sudan. His name is Abousfian Abdelrazik, as people will know. We have asked questions in the House about him.

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us how much it would cost to repatriate Mr. Abousfian Abdelrazik to Canada?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, we are aware of this case. I do not understand the hon. member's question. Is he asking about the cost of repatriating him while he is still in Sudan? I cannot comment much on it as there is currently a court case going on.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I simply asked, Mr. Chair, how much it would cost and I will leave that with the government to calculate. It is simply about airlift, providing air passage for a Canadian citizen to come back. We have established that this has been done in the past. Perhaps we could do it in a more cost effective manner.

I want to ask a couple of questions about Canada's participation in the mission in Afghanistan. Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us how much the mission in Afghanistan is costing the Department of Foreign Affairs presently, not the whole government?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, as part of the package of materials that will be brought before the parliamentary committee and will form part of our reporting publicly, we will be getting more current data on the costs and the different elements of costing. We will be happy to share that with him as it becomes available.

●(2155)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I am asking how much it is costing presently, not future costs. Therefore, I will leave that as a question for him. We are talking about the estimates. I hoped we would get a response from him about how much it cost the department.

Unrelated to that, it has been a couple of months since the House passed the extension of the mission in Afghanistan. I just came back from Afghanistan and I apologize for the jet lag.

We know the three things that were committed and concrete. We know about the thousand troops from NATO. We know about the helicopters and drones. What is missing is the government's response on the other facets to the motion.

The PCO travelled to that region for more than a week a couple of weeks. In the field, when we talked to people, they were waiting for the special cabinet committee to respond to give them direction.

Therefore, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who also happens to be the chair of the cabinet committee, and I hope to get a detailed answer on this.

When can Parliament and when can, more important, the people in the field in Afghanistan expect a very detailed response to not only the motion but to provide direction to the people in the field?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, we are in the process of finalizing the documents and materials and taking them through an appropriate decision making process. We will be briefing the parliamentary committee shortly. All the information the hon. member seeks will be available I would think by summer. I look forward to taking the committee through the plans.

With regard to the people who are there, we have a very good strong team of public servants from across government. They are there on what we call a rolling start program to start to get our feet on the ground and to get our capacity in place to dramatically enhance our civilian and developmental presence in Afghanistan. We will take him through that once we have the material completed.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I would like to turn to human rights reporting. Could the minister confirm whether Canadian missions abroad are continuing to produce up to date reports on human rights conditions of the country or the region under its purview? I would like to know if it is still the policy of the government to provide up to date human rights reviews of any particular region or country under its purview.

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, the hon. member will know that our foreign policy, our embassies, our consulates and our missions abroad are very much focused on human rights, on governance, on rule of law, as well as trade, commercial and consular matters. That would be something that we would get ongoing routine information and updating on.

The United Nations, of course, provides probably a more robust systematic database, but certainly we are watching that at all times.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I believe I asked a very specific question about the Canadian government's policy in its embassies overseas, which had been the case before. I know that because through ATI we were able to get human rights reports up to 2006 but it has stopped.

*Business of Supply*

Is the government still providing, through its embassies, human rights reporting on the regions and the countries under the purview of the embassies, yes or no?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, the answer is yes, we do have that information and we do report on it. If it has not been made available, I will follow up and find out what the reason might be.

● (2200)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I would like to now turn to corporate social responsibility. It has already been mentioned that the government was looking at it. I want to point out that it has been over 425 days since the release of the report. In fact, when asked at committee and in the House last year, the government said that it would have a response very soon.

It has now been 425 days since the consensus report was actually tabled. This is a report that was civil society and business established. All the government needs to do is report. First, I want to know if we can expect a response before Parliament rises.

Second, were there any discussions with members of Barrick Gold on this report? In other words, were there any meetings at all with the government and Barrick Gold regarding corporate social responsibility?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, as I said earlier, the government is not standing still on corporate social responsibility. We have adopted through a variety of mechanisms. We have the guidelines under the OECD. The G-8 are working on a series of corporate responsibility guidelines in a number of areas.

We are certainly dealing with countries multilaterally to ensure that Canada is taking a leadership position but doing so in a way that ensures Canada is working on a consistent set of principles that would be applied not only by Canada, but by other of our trading partners.

We are moving ahead on corporate social responsibility. I am not going to give a specific timeframe right now but we are certainly getting very close.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I did not want a specific date from the minister. I want to know whether we can expect a response from the government before the House rises for the summer.

Second, were there any discussions between Barrick Gold and the government around the corporate social responsibility report?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, on the Barrick question, we have had numerous discussions with numerous companies and numerous groups of civil society and so on, both during the round table process and since. I would not want to say that there is any secret about that. It is our obligation to ensure we are getting a balanced set of views and we do undertake to get those views. I do not control the timing on the finalization of this report.

[Translation]

**The Deputy Chair:** The next block of time belongs to the official opposition.

The hon. member for Laval—Les Îles.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and the member for Toronto Centre.

In 2000-01, 36% of CIDA's aid budget was allocated through civil society organizations. However, in 2005-06, spending through these same organizations dropped to 17% of the agency's budget.

Since civil society organizations play an essential role in development initiatives, how will the minister guarantee that these partnerships will not become even weaker?

[English]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Chair, this government recognizes how important civil society is to development work, not only working with our Canadian partners but international partners. We also support civil society in developing countries because it, too, plays an important role in ensuring that progress is made in those countries.

On the question revolving around support for civil society, we continue to do that and we do it in a way to ensure that the support we are giving will show results and be effective.

A number of organizations know their work is very valued by us because it does make a difference in the lives of people in developing countries.

● (2205)

[Translation]

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Mr. Chair, as I already said, spending that once accounted for 36% of CIDA's budget has fallen to 17%. I do not see how that squares with the minister's answer.

In January 2006, the government committed to promoting foreign development assistance, allocating \$425 million over five years. Despite this, levels of foreign development assistance have dropped from 0.34% of the gross national income in 2005, to 0.29% in 2006, to just 0.2% in 2007.

What assurances can the minister give us that official foreign development assistance will at least be brought back up to its 2005 level of 0.34%?

[English]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Chair, I answered that question previously. I will reiterate that this government is committed to doubling its international assistance from the 2001-02 levels. We have committed to not only doubling aid to Africa but we will also ensure that when we do double our international aid it will be used effectively. By the commitments we have made, our total international assistance will reach approximately \$5 billion in 2010-11.

*Business of Supply*

I want to reiterate that it is not just the amount of money, it is how effective it will be and the value of the usage of those dollars. We know we can do our international development work more effectively to get better results and that Canadians will appreciate that we are doing international assistance responsibly and ensuring that taxpayers can see the value and the results of their investments.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Chair:** The member for Laval—Les Îles has one minute for the question and response.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Mr. Chair, I would like to know the minister's opinion on the United States' embargo on Cuba.

[*English*]

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, that embargo is an American embargo. Canada does not have an embargo. We are watching the Cuban situation as the regime evolves and changes. We are hopeful there will be changes for the better toward human rights and democratic governments.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I welcome the minister and wish him the best in his new responsibilities.

I have a question for him. Many Canadians are concerned about the change of government policy toward advocating on behalf of Canadians facing the death penalty abroad. When the Minister of Justice stands he says that we do not have the death penalty in Canada, but that is not the question, and then we hear that it may be on a case by case basis.

I want to ask the minister himself, whose reputation I admire and whose work I respect, whether he believes that Canada has a moral obligation to advocate for the abolition of the death penalty here and abroad.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, as the Minister of Justice has stated, there is no death penalty in Canada and this government will not revisit that subject. However, in reference to Canadians abroad, we will examine each case, as the Minister of Justice has stated, and that will remain the policy of the Government of Canada.

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for his personal response.

Is the minister aware that Great Britain has decided not to include Canada further in the Commonwealth scholarships?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, a couple of nights ago the hon. member asked me that question and at that time I answered that we had made representations to the government of the U.K. to revisit this issue about the Commonwealth scholarships.

I would also like it if he could write a letter to the foreign minister's secretary of the British government and have his party tell the British government to revisit the subject.

• (2210)

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Chair, I would be happy to do that. I hope the government does some of its own work in the future.

We are concerned about the reputation of Canada abroad. We have seen the incident with the governor of Kandahar. We have had NAFTA-gate and the debacles of Burma. We have Canada's reputation on capital punishment being sullied around the world.

That was before the minister dropped his briefs in an appropriate place and forget to pick them up. That was before the Prime Minister misquoted the prime minister of Italy.

This is a very significant concern for Canadian students. I am sure the minister would know Stephen Toope, the president of the University of British Columbia, who said that this was tremendously shortsighted. Jennifer Humphries, VP of membership at the Canadian Bureau for International Education said that Canada has traditionally been a very good, strong partner, so it is a slap in the face to Canada.

Others have said that they are hoping our government will put pressure on the U.K. to reinstate the program. Kevin Lynch, Stephen Toope and a large number of Canadians have benefited from this and Canada has benefited from this.

Let me try a personal approach with the minister. After only three days, I do not expect him to have all the answers, but will he take a personal interest? Will somebody over there stand up for Canadian students and for Canada abroad and ensure we are reinstated in the Commonwealth scholarships which we helped to form?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his kind comments a little earlier. He is getting a little agitated now but I forgive him.

The answer to his question is yes, I will take a personal interest in this particular scholarship program. I want to assure the hon. member that there is a tremendous amount of work ongoing right now to develop and enhance various policies to enable Canada to attract more international students and to ensure Canadian students have a greater opportunity to attend foreign educational institutions.

It is a global economy with global value chains and it will be increasingly important for Canadians, and Canadian young people in particular, to be able to work not only here in Canada but abroad, and international education and experience will be a critical priority.

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Chair, unfortunately, it was a decision of the Conservative government in 2006 which abandoned international studies and made it easy for Great Britain to cancel the Commonwealth scholarships.

While he is on his feet, let me ask him again. Would he agree with me that Canada has a moral obligation to stand up for Canadians facing the death penalty abroad? Does he believe that Canada has a moral obligation to work for the abolition of the death penalty here and around the world?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, it is clear that Canada has abolished the death penalty and Canada is also active in a multilateral context to pursue the elimination of the death penalty around the world. I can only say yes.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, I want to ask the minister a question about China. Mr. Harder, the former deputy minister of foreign affairs, wrote an article the other day in the *Globe and Mail* which said something which a number of us have been feeling and that is that there is a definite political chill in the relationship between the Government of Canada and the government of China. He said:

Canadian business leaders are reporting that contracts are definitely being lost as a direct result of the chill between our most senior political leaders.

It would be good to have the minister's view on this issue since the former deputy minister has made that comment.

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, I have been to China half a dozen times in the last three or four years. We have had numerous ministerial visits. Our trade numbers are growing rapidly. China is now our number two export market. It is our number two trading partner. I was over in China last week and had very good meetings with a very good reception.

If the hon. member or Mr. Harder believe that we should not be expressing Canada's views on human rights and the treatment of certain individuals in consular cases, the government has made it very clear that we are going to carry on a dialogue. We are going to engage China and we are going to call a spade a spade where we have issue.

• (2215)

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, I am sure the minister has read the article by Mr. Harder and I am sure he will know perfectly well that neither Mr. Harder nor anyone else I know believes that Canada should ever pull its punches with respect to human rights in China or anywhere else, in Colombia or any other country. That is not the issue.

The issue is that there is undoubtedly a political chill because of the failure of the Prime Minister to address the important nature of the relationship with China. Does the minister believe that the Prime Minister himself should be visiting China very soon?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister has been very clear. He has had discussions with President Hu. He is at the top of the book paying respect to the earthquake victims in China. We have a diplomatic engagement that is ongoing and getting, if anything, more intense. I am sure that the Prime Minister will be a big part of this engagement as we go forward.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, a former deputy minister has taken the rather unusual step of writing an op-ed piece in the *Globe and Mail* to talk about what he perceives to be a major deterioration in the political relationship between Canada and China. This is a relationship, I might say to hon. members opposite, that Mr. Diefenbaker started by significantly opening up trade along with the minister of agriculture, Alvin Hamilton, back in the days of Mao Zedong. He did not seem to have any difficulty doing business in that way, and neither did Mr. Pearson, Mr. Trudeau, and Mr. Mulroney, the former Prime Minister of Canada.

I would like to ask the minister once again, does he not see the folly of insisting that we either choose the human rights route or the economic route, and does he not believe that, as the minister said in his opening remarks, "it is a matter of Canada pursuing both its interests and its values"? I would ask him: Does he not see the

importance of the Prime Minister understanding the necessity to do that with respect to China?

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, we clearly recognize that it is not exclusive to deal with advocacy on human rights and related issues, and to pursue a robust and growing trade relationship. When we look at the data, our trade relationship is growing. Our investment relationship is growing.

The time that I spent in China the last couple of years and the last few trips over there, there is just tremendous interest on the part of China in engaging and working with Canada to promote two-way investment, to engage in dialogue on issues of concern to us as the Chinese have issues of concern to them. That is what is happening and that will continue to happen.

**The Deputy Chair:** The next block of time belongs to the government. I recognize the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I would like to spend some time telling members about our government's most focused attention to our neighbours in the Americas. The Americas are a priority for our government. The Americas are a region of exciting opportunity, a region where we can make a real difference.

As honourable members are aware, our government is committed to Canada's long term re-engagement with the hemisphere, based on three mutual reinforcing themes: prosperity, democratic governance, and security.

There is much that Canada can do, and that is why our government has sent representatives at the highest levels to visit the region on a regular basis. The Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Minister of International Cooperation, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Trade as well as myself have made numerous visits to the region over the past two years, along with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade.

Building these personal relationships is important because it contributes to stronger ties among our countries. Enhancing Canada's access to emerging markets in the hemisphere is a key focus for us.

The Americas are clearly in a region of dynamic, economic potential. We know that Canada is the third largest investor in the region and our trade flows are growing rapidly. That is the good news.

Canada's experience with the United States, Mexico, Chile and Costa Rica has shown that free trade makes a major contribution to economic development. That is why we are pursuing a robust regional free trade agenda.

We are building on an established presence in the region by working with like-minded states. Chile is one such partner. We have celebrated 10 years of free trade and look forward to continuing our close relations. In doing so, we are providing Canadian companies with the chance to secure new opportunities in dynamic markets.

*Business of Supply*

Mexico is one of our largest suppliers of temporary foreign workers. These foreign workers are essential to our agriculture sector, and both Canada and Mexico benefit greatly from this mutually beneficial arrangement.

We are also engaging Brazil, a regional powerhouse. It is the eighth largest economy in the world, and I am happy to report that our relationship is defined by a growing partnership and cooperation.

In addition, our bilateral relationship is improving based on a two-way investment, cooperation in Haiti and a growing personal rapport between government leaders.

My colleagues, the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade as well as the Parliamentary Secretary of International Trade, have already informed the House about the many negotiations under way and the progress we are making.

At the same time, as we look to these countries for opportunity, we must be mindful of our commitment to freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Canada's second objective in the Americas is to bolster the hemisphere's commitment to freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

I am pleased to report today that we have already accomplished a great deal. However, the maturity and the depth of democratic governance varies across countries. That is why the Prime Minister has offered to share the Canadian model of democratic freedom and economic openness, combined with effective regional and social support.

Building a safe and secure hemisphere is our third objective. That is why we have worked with partners in the region to enhance the law enforcement and judicial capacities.

In Colombia, Canada has active programming to promote stability and peace. As stated in the Speech from the Throne, the best way to foster development and security is through bolstering international trade. That is why we are also currently negotiating a free trade agreement with Colombia.

Haiti is another good example of where we are working in close cooperation with others like the United States, Brazil, Chile and Argentina, to enhance security. As the Prime Minister noted when he travelled to the region last summer, Haiti is "a test case for the Americas; for our capacity as neighbours and friends to get together in the common endeavour". The Prime Minister is right.

During a visit to Brazil last year, my colleague, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Trade, had an opportunity to thank that country for the strong support it had been providing through its leadership in the UN stabilization mission in Haiti.

All Canadians can take pride in the government's unprecedented financial commitment to Haiti: \$555 million over five years to 2011. Haiti is the second largest recipient of Canadian development assistance in the world after Afghanistan.

● (2220)

My colleague, the hon. Minister of International Cooperation, is an expert in how this money is addressing immediate needs and laying the foundation for Haiti's long term development.

Canada is also among the top donors in advancing security reforms in Haiti. The government recently announced an additional \$19 million for police reform and border management to support the recruitment, training and operations of the Haitian national police.

We have also invested in the Caribbean. In 2007 Canada contributed some \$7 million in aid in response to numerous storms affecting the Caribbean islands.

Canada is the largest donor to the World Bank's Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility with a \$20 million contribution. I am happy to report that CIDA is developing a \$20 million natural disaster risk management insurance facility to strengthen the central agency's capacity to respond.

Another tool we have to help accomplish our Americas strategy is sport. Sport promotes democratic principles, fosters social cohesion, and supports individual and institutional development. Throughout the Americas there is a clear appetite for increased Canadian leadership within sport in the region.

I am happy to inform the House that Canada has been very instrumental in the development of the Sport Council of the Americas, an organization whose main objective is to facilitate a broad intergovernmental discussion and cooperation on sport issues in the Americas.

Our government has recently signed sport bilateral agreements with countries such as Brazil and Peru to develop projects. These agreements will enable our countries to cooperate in the areas of sport governance, anti-doping, women in sport, and sport for development and peace.

On another front, we are working through regional organizations and international financial institutions to advance our goals.

Last week, the vice president of Colombia visited Canada. He conveyed his thanks for our ongoing support for peace and human rights in his country. He spoke of the work that Canadians are doing in assisting children and women affected by the longstanding conflict, and he thanked the Prime Minister for supporting a free trade agreement which will bring new opportunities for Colombians.

In conclusion, in reply to the Speech from the Throne, the Prime Minister said:

Many nations in Latin America and the Caribbean are pursuing market reform and democratic development, but others are falling back to economic nationalism and protectionism, to political populism and authoritarianism.

That's why it's so important for countries like Canada to engage — to demonstrate there are alternative models that can meet people's aspirations.

Mr. Speaker, Canada can make a difference in the world.

*Business of Supply*

• (2225)

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** Mr. Chair, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for his hard work on the foreign affairs and international development committee, as well as for his speeches here this evening. I would like to follow up on some of his remarks in regard to hemispheric security.

The Americas, like other parts of the world, are facing new forms of security risks and challenges in the 21st century. They are trying to adopt programs to help facilitate those concerns. Canada needs a strategy as well and we are developing that strategy. We need to strengthen security and the rule of law in this hemisphere.

Of concern in some of the Americas is the violence and the drugs there. How can we stop violence and drugs there before they come here? Canada must face up to the challenges that diseases and emerging forms of lethal viruses such as the Avian flu pose to our collective safety and well-being.

As we enter the hurricane season in this hemisphere, I think all of us are still horrified by the pictures that we have seen coming out of Burma as well as the pictures following the earthquake in China. This should serve as a chilling wake-up call that disasters can wreak havoc on citizens and on economies just as much as terrorism and wars.

In the case of the Americas, these security challenges are not halfway around the world but quite literally on our doorstep. The parliamentary secretary mentioned that 2.5 million Canadians travel to the region every year. I think of the citizens in those countries and those Canadians who could be in harm's way. I think of the potential diseases that could inflict the region and could easily be brought back to our cities. A doctor in Chestermere Lake, Alberta, has written to me a number of times with concerns about the kinds of diseases that could make their way back to Canada and hurt our economy.

My question to the parliamentary secretary is: How is Canada prepared to manage these security challenges?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, since we are expressing thanks, I am sure my colleague on the other side, the Liberal foreign affairs critic, will join me in thanking our chair of the foreign affairs committee for doing a wonderful job.

As for the question, which is extremely important and timely, I would like to first point out that after 13 years of neglecting the Americas, Canada is back and playing an active role. We are re-engaging with the region.

There are indeed security challenges in the Americas. Because of our desire to protect Canadians at home and abroad, as well as our neighbours in the hemisphere, we have developed a multi-pronged approach.

On health and pandemic concerns, Canada is focused on building regional solutions to the leading health issues. Working with Health Canada and the Pan American Health Organization, we are developing national policies and programs that reflect the commitment of countries to work with us toward viable and effective programs. We will achieve results by providing the required training

and expertise to ensure countries are better equipped to address these concerns on their own and for the long term.

My colleague is quite correct in referring to the unfortunate events that have taken place in Burma. Canada is very concerned by the frequency and the increasing impact of natural disasters, including those that occur in the Americas. We are working to actively promote and support disaster risk reduction activities in the hemisphere.

For instance, in 2007 Canada announced a \$20 million program to help communities, governments and regional institutions in the Caribbean enhance their disaster preparedness and response capabilities, as well as another \$20 million for the new Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility.

Canada also has a history of responding rapidly and appropriately to natural disasters around the world and is working to further strengthen the international disaster response system. Over the last two fiscal years, for instance, Canada has provided \$7.5 million in humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of the areas in the Americas affected by natural disasters and has been working with regional and international agencies to enhance response capabilities in the Americas.

These are examples of this government's actions which demonstrate that we are well positioned and motivated to respond to the security challenges in the hemisphere.

• (2230)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Chair:** The Bloc Québécois has the next block of time. The hon. member for Gatineau has the floor for 15 minutes.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I would like to begin by saying that I find it very interesting that we are discussing international issues. In a former life, when I taught secondary school, I took part in or set up UN debating clubs in four different schools. I myself took part in the first Southern Ontario Model United Nations Assembly in 1977. I was the ambassador from Lebanon, a country that was going through a very difficult time then. Because of that experience, I have always had an interest in and an affinity for international affairs.

A number of issues interest me. I would like to know what Canada's position is on la Francophonie, the Canadian International Development Agency and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and where we are headed.

*Business of Supply*

I will start with the Ottawa convention, which expired in 2007. Not long ago, in November 2007, when I was in Laos with the Minister for La Francophonie, we met with an NGO that was working on mine clearance. In Laos, during the war in Vietnam, the Americans—who always denied it—dropped roughly 10 million bombs, a third of which did not explode. When you go to Laos, you see men working in the fields who are missing a leg. The same is true of boys. This is an extremely difficult situation. Canada was a major partner. Thanks to CIDA and la Francophonie, Canada helped Laos clear mines and unearth the bombs dropped by American B-52s. They did not explode because they were dropped from too low an altitude.

That said, I have a question for the Minister for La Francophonie. Since Laos is a member of the international French-speaking community, I would like to know what sort of support Canada is providing for Laos and the other countries in this regard. The Ottawa convention was an extraordinary treaty on anti-personnel mines and mine clearance. It expired in 2007, and there was no indication that the government wanted to renew the treaty.

[English]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Chair, our government supports the Ottawa accord and we have done much work regarding landmines.

In fact, as an example, in Afghanistan alone and with our support, 1.3 billion square metres of land have been cleared, in 1,700 communities. More than 520,000 mines and more than 8,200,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance have been destroyed.

Similar kinds of activities are happening in many countries where we are working on this. We work with the Department of Foreign Affairs, which undertakes demining activities as well. When I was in Colombia, we had discussions about the work being done there on demining.

Unfortunately, landmines are prevalent in many countries in conflict. We work with the governments. We work with the United Nations. In fact, in 2007 we contributed a further \$80 million to the United Nations Mine Action Service, which will extend until the year 2012. We have certainly responded in those areas and are working with governments where landmines are a concern.

As we all know, these are dangerous not only to people who are trying to be productive and undertake agriculture and move around in their countries so they can pursue their livelihoods, but also unfortunate is the effect this has on children. I know that this government is very concerned about that. The children are trying to go to school and enjoy themselves in play as well as pursue their activities around their towns and villages.

• (2235)

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague. Still on the subject of landmines, we know that the United States and China are still producing these inhumane weapons. In so doing, they are working against agreements that Canada has signed to get rid of these weapons for good.

What is Canada's position on that? How does it plan to influence producers as massive as the United States and the People's Republic of China, which are still producing mines and are not helping solve

the problem? They are doing anything but offering solutions. I would like to know more about the government's diplomatic tactics in this regard.

[English]

**Hon. David Emerson:** Mr. Chair, I think our most effective strategy, and it is going to take time, is to ensure that as many countries as possible are party to multilateral agreements, trying along the way to ensure that some of the outliers that have not become party to the agreements start to feel some moral and diplomatic pressure from those who are.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Mr. Chair, on another subject, we—I mean in my former life as a teacher—met with Quebec, Canadian and even German aid workers to discuss the terrible Rwandan genocide tragedy. One aspect of the tragedy that we found most moving and that really touched young people and high school students—not to mention that touched most of us, as parents—was the issue of child soldiers.

Here in Canada, we have a child soldier, or at least, we have someone who was a child soldier when conflict broke out in Afghanistan, and who was taken prisoner. His name is Omar Khadr.

I know that people have already asked questions about this, but there are some answers I would like to hear. What has the current government done to help countries with child soldiers rehabilitate them and help them escape the clutches of those who kill?

Also, what will it do about our citizen, who is still a prisoner of war and who was a child soldier when he was taken prisoner?

What is our position on child soldiers, and what kind of example will we set in Mr. Khadr's case?

• (2240)

[English]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, as I have stated, Mr. Khadr faces serious charges. However, the Government of Canada does provide consular assistance, which we have been doing for Mr. Khadr. We will wait for the outcome of the appeals and everything.

In reference to the child soldiers, Canada has been at the forefront in trying to rehabilitate child soldiers in the war. The former minister of foreign affairs, who is now the Minister of National Defence, attended a conference in Winnipeg where he clearly stated Canada's commitment to help the UN in getting child soldiers retrained and back into society. That is one of the main thrusts of the development assistance that Canada has been doing.

Canada is at the forefront working with the United Nations in doing that. As a matter of fact, I would like my hon. friend to know that a Canadian is leading one of the most successful missions in Burundi in trying to get child soldiers back into normal society. Canada is working very hard on that front.

*Business of Supply*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Mr. Chair, on another note, but still on the topic of international matters, I would like to know how Canada sees its involvement in la Francophonie with regard to the development of the French fact or at least the enhancement of the French fact around the globe, throughout all the cultures that speak our language.

I would also like to know how Canada is setting an example on francophone matters when it comes to promoting, and at the same time, ensuring spinoffs right here, to combat this very difficult scourge facing our communities. The further one gets from Quebec, the more one is faced with ethnolinguistic assimilation, that is, the anglicization of francophones. We have also seen a bit of this same phenomenon in Quebec.

I would like to know what is being done internationally and, as a result, get an idea of the validity of Canada's approach, if it has one, to combating the scourge of linguistic assimilation.

**Hon. Josée Verner:** Mr. Chair, Canada is very involved in la Francophonie, both internationally and within Canada, as I indicated in my speech a few hours ago.

As the hon. member knows, Canada will be chairing the next Sommet de la Francophonie. One of the chosen themes, in fact, is language. Canada took on a leadership role on language issues at the convention on cultural diversity.

In terms of Canadian Francophonie and also in the context of Quebec City's upcoming 400th anniversary celebrations, Canada gave \$1.1 million to the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française for the "francoforce project", which will tour the country, stopping in 14 cities from May 30 until September.

These are all measures intended to promote the French language in Canada.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Mr. Chair, with respect to the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, we know there was an important meeting last summer, not so long ago, in Montebello with the U.S. president and the Mexican president. We as parliamentarians and citizens have a very hard time with the fact that this type of meeting, which deals with aspects of everyone's lives, is held behind closed doors.

What is the current government doing to ensure that drinking water is not considered a commodity in the North American Free Trade Agreement? Will drinking water continue to be excluded from being considered merchandise, to protect this extremely important resource that Quebec and Canada have in abundance but that should not be wasted and slip through the hands of the highest bidder?

• (2245)

[*English*]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Chair, the answer is quite simple. Every once in a while one of the opposition members asks this question. The answer never changes. Water is not a commodity. Water is not traded across the border. It was not traded by the previous government and it will not be traded by this government.

Further to that, the regulations in the International Boundary Waters Treaty Act prohibit the bulk removal of boundary waters from their water basins for any reason.

The opposition parties can continue to ask this question, but the answer will remain the same.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Mr. Chair, if we ask the question, it is because we have no guarantees and parliamentarians are not invited to these very important discussions. Perhaps if the government opened its doors, was far-sighted and demonstrated greater transparency in this matter, we would not ask the question so many times.

I would like the Minister of Foreign Affairs to tell us when we will learn about the current government's first policy on Canada's geopolitical position on foreign affairs, which also touches on—

**The Deputy Chair:** I regret that I must interrupt the hon. member. The clock shows that the time has expired.

[*English*]

I will allow equal time to the minister.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** I was not certain, Mr. Chair, about the question, but I think he was continuing on bulk water. Bulk water is not tradeable. It is not a commodity.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Toronto Centre has the floor and the block of time is about six minutes.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, there was a press report this afternoon that the military judge in the Omar Khadr case has in fact been dismissed because, according to the press report, he was seen to have been critical of the prosecution for its having not disclosed information to the defendant.

I wonder if the government can tell us what it will take with respect to the prosecution of this case in the United States. They have dismissed the issue of child soldiers, which we have raised consistently. They have now dismissed the military judge in this case. What exactly will it take for Canada to intervene the way every other country has in seeking to repatriate people who are still in Guantanamo?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, as I have stated, Mr. Khadr faces very serious charges in relation to his being captured in Afghanistan: murder in violation of the laws of war and attempted murder in violation of the laws of war, conspiracy, providing material support for terrorism, spying.

As we know, Mr. Khadr has been going through an appeal process and legal process in the U.S. We will wait to see the outcome of the legal process to deal with this.

The Government of Canada is providing Mr. Khadr with consular services and making sure that he is treated humanely.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, I wonder if the parliamentary secretary can tell me, what is two plus two?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** I do understand, Mr. Chair, that this is about estimates, and estimates mean money, and money means counting. He has asked what is two plus two, so I can tell him it is four.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, the reason I asked the question is that I wanted to know whether or not the government members could actually answer a question in a direct fashion. I am glad to say that they are able to answer a direct question.

Perhaps I could ask the parliamentary secretary, was he aware that the judge in the Khadr case had been dismissed? Were you aware of that?

**The Deputy Chair:** I am not recognizing the hon. member yet. The hon. member for Toronto Centre, as much as he has been a member of four parliaments so far, he is a member of the Privy Council, he is a front bencher, and he used the second person. I have asked him not to do that. We ask questions in the third person.

We only have two and a half minutes left. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

• (2250)

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, this development happened today and is in the news today.

To answer his question, we have not been avoiding the question. We have been answering the question. We have been answering the same question every day they have been asking it. I do not know why the member says we are not answering his question. We are answering his question.

Let me say again that Canada is providing consular services to Mr. Khadr, departmental services to ensure his well-being and that he is being treated humanely.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, perhaps the parliamentary secretary could try to answer the question since he now says he was aware of it and the government has been aware of it. Can the parliamentary secretary answer the question? Does the fact that the judge in this

case has been dismissed affect in any way the attitude of the Canadian government with respect to the treatment of Omar Khadr? What is the answer?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, I know the member is a new member of the Liberal Party. He was a former NDP premier of Ontario. I want to tell him that we are applying the same policy that was put in place by the previous government in 2002.

Any questions regarding whether Canada plans to ask for the release of Omar Khadr are premature and speculative as the legal process is still going on. Whether the judge has been dismissed or not, it is still going on.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Toronto Centre. There is one minute for both the question and the answer.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Chair, would the government not agree that the dismissal of the judge in the case on the grounds that the military has taken represents a significant new development in the Khadr case?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, I am not going to comment on a judicial process in another country.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Chair:** It being 10:35 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) all votes are deemed reported. The committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Accordingly this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10:53 p.m.)





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