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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, December 1, 2010

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, December 1, 2010

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for London West.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

PETERBOROUGH

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today in recognition of Peterborough being recognized in a recent survey as the second happiest city in Ontario and seventh happiest overall in Canada.

Home to the world's tallest hydraulic liftlock and the Trent Severn waterway, Peterborough was nicknamed "electric city" when it became the first city in North America to light up electric street lights. That vibrance still drives our beautiful and industrious region to this day, whether in our factories, hockey rinks, performance venues or our outstanding post-secondary institutions.

What has always made me proud of my hometown is its heart and generosity. Nowhere in Canada is the expression that the greatest joy is the one that comes from giving on better display than in Peterborough.

Now the electric city region and Peterborough are happy to share our collective joy with all Canadians. In fact, once we re-establish passenger rail service between Peterborough and Toronto's Union Station, we will have connected one of Canada's happiest cities to Canada's least happy, according to the same survey.

Not to worry Toronto, Peterborough will be only too happy to share the joy along the Shining Waters Railway just as soon as the trains start running.

OIL TANKER TRAFFIC

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday a remarkable coalition of B.C. businesses, first nations, environmental groups and fisheries representatives stood side by side with MPs in Ottawa, united in their call for a legislated ban on oil tanker traffic in the Pacific north coast waters.

The notable exception was the 22 Conservatives from B.C. who reject this urgent call, despite the fact that eight of every ten British Columbians support a ban. The government is evidently not in touch with the views of British Columbians. Nor is the government listening to business.

The B.C. Wilderness Tourism Association, representing more than 1,000 of the 56,000 businesses that depend on an unspoiled coastal ecosystem, came to support the ban.

This is not a radical new proposal. For decades governments banned tanker traffic in these dangerous waters. The Conservative government is threatening to break that trust with British Columbians by supporting a crude oil pipeline directly into the heart of one of the world's best-loved wilderness destinations.

Liberal members of Parliament stand with British Columbians in support of permanent protection for the waters surrounding our precious Haida Gwaii.

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[Translation]

GUY RONDEAU

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on October 29, many people in Huberdeau gathered to celebrate the fact that Dr. Guy Rondeau has been practising in their area for 50 years. A small ad that ran in *Le Devoir* led Dr. Rondeau to this small community in the Laurentians.

There were many pressing needs in this rural region in the 1960s, which meant that this doctor had to wear many hats. His main areas of expertise are surgery, pediatrics, psychiatry and gynecology.

In addition to wearing all of those hats, the doctor had this to say about his other duties: "I was often the ambulance, driving labouring women or victims of car accidents to the hospital. And I also made numerous house calls." He likes to laugh about it now.

For all the patients he has taken care of, all the babies he has delivered, all the services he has provided and his outstanding dedication, I want to join the people of Huberdeau in wholeheartedly thanking Dr. Rondeau and his assistant and wife, Céline Tassé.

Statements by Members

[English]

CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Victoria has some remarkable museums and public galleries, such as the Victoria Art Gallery and the Maritime and Royal BC Museums.

Keystones in communities nationwide, such institutions employ about 25,000 people, receive 60 million visits a year and contribute \$650 million in wages, but only 9% of their operational funds come from private donations. The NDP's proposed tax credit for charitable gifts would encourage more Canadians to invest in our heritage.

Another innovative solution is being proposed by the Canadian Museums Association. It is asking Ottawa to match private donations dollar for dollar up to \$25 million a year.

I urge the government to back our Bill C-600 and partner with the Canadian Museums Association to give Canadian culture and the arts a more stable financial foundation.

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COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION FOR RIDING FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to CARD, the Community Association for Riding for the Disabled.

The therapeutic benefits of horse riding for those with disabilities have been recognized for over 3,000 years. Therapeutic riding and other safe, purposeful and supervised interaction with horses is medically recognized to benefit children and adults with almost any cognitive, physical or emotional disability. These riders gain meaning, joy and an immense sense of empowerment from their interaction with horses.

CARD is supported by the dedication and commitment of many volunteers. One such volunteer is Barbara Fogler. Barbara is an award-winning dressage rider, supporter of the Canadian Olympic equestrian team and webmaster of barnmice.com.

I would like to congratulate Barbara Fogler and the hundreds of other volunteers who have spent many hours assisting with the Community Association for Riding for the Disabled.

* * *

• (1410)

WORLD AIDS DAY

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, worldwide celebrations are being held to commemorate World AIDS Day.

This morning I had the pleasure to join the co-chairs of the HIV-AIDS and TB caucus to host the first annual parliamentary World AIDS Day breakfast. It was an inspiring morning, with parliamentarians, organizations, advocates and survivors who had gathered to hear many heartfelt speeches.

This year's theme for World AIDS Day is universal access and human rights, a theme that all Canadians can support to ensure that

human rights are protected and global targets are met for the prevention, the treatment and the care of HIV and AIDS.

I join all of the HAT caucus members to pay tribute to those who have lost their lives, to the 33 million men, women and children who are currently living with HIV and AIDS and also pay great admiration and respect for the thousands of volunteers, organizations and advocates who are giving people hope for a better future and a brighter tomorrow.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the international trade committee visited our counterparts in the European Parliament to promote new markets and a free trade agreement with the European Union. The reception we received made me proud to be a Canadian.

Canada is a recognized world leader. The vision and leadership of our Prime Minister has fostered new trade agreements, expanded Canadian markets and stimulated economic growth.

Recently the *Wall Street Journal* noted:

Under [the Prime Minister]'s leadership Canada has avoided the worst of the global recession and emerged with a vibrant banking system and a strong currency...

The *Globe and Mail* said:

Canada has won global praise for its economic outlook and its handling of public finances, which has drawn investors into the Canadian dollar, which puts [Canada's the Prime Minister] in a strong position to give advice.

Countries around the world have acknowledged and praised this advice and the direction of Canada's economic and foreign policies.

* * *

[Translation]

FOLK MUSIC AWARDS

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the sixth annual Folk Music Awards gala was held on Saturday, November 20, in Winnipeg. Several Quebec artists were honoured, including Yves Lambert for his album *Bal à l'huile*, which won the traditional singer of the year award. Yves Lambert was, of course, one of the founding members of La Bottine Souriante and the Bébérte Orchestre.

The ensemble of the year award went to Quebec's Le Vent du Nord for its album *La part du feu*. I should note that Yves Lambert and Le Vent du Nord are from the Lanaudière region.

To prove that I am not biased, I would also like to mention the songwriter of the year award, which went to a third Quebec artist, Francis d'Octobre, for his album *Ma bête fragile*.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind the government that awards do not pay the bills for artists and other creators, who are entitled to fair compensation for their work. That is why Bill C-32 needs major changes.

Statements by Members

[English]

WORLD AIDS DAY

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is World AIDS Day, a time to remember those who live with and are affected by HIV and AIDS and to reflect upon those who have lost their lives to this devastating disease.

Our government has committed to a comprehensive long-term approach to HIV and AIDS in Canada and around the world. This year alone, we are investing over \$72 million domestically in HIV and AIDS. As well, our government has provided more than \$640 million over the past four years to help prevent the spread of the virus and provide support to those living with HIV-AIDS in developing countries.

In addition, the Canadian HIV vaccine initiative, led by our government along with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, highlights Canada's world-class HIV and vaccine research expertise.

I ask that members join me today in wearing a red ribbon to raise awareness and to show our support for those affected by HIV and AIDS.

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[Translation]

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have risen in this House to congratulate the Prime Minister. The Conservative caucus is very proud of the Prix de la noirceur that the Prime Minister received from the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec.

When it comes to keeping people in the dark, the Prime Minister is in a class of his own, joined only by the grand master, Maurice Duplessis.

Journalists rewarded the Prime Minister for his life's work, which includes obstruction, muzzling journalists, prohibiting questions, deceit and intimidation, witch hunts in the public service and political interference in access to information requests.

The Conservative government has quite a record when it comes to keeping people in the dark. Their promises of transparency have gone up in smoke, and that smoke is shrouding the Prime Minister in darkness and obscurantism.

* * *

● (1415)

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today our government announced changes to the Hazardous Products Act. These new regulations will protect babies in their cribs, cradles and bassinets. Our government is committed to helping parents protect the health and safety of our children.

Canada's requirements for cribs and cradles are among the most stringent in the world. However, there is always room for improvement. At present, bassinets are not subject to any regulations in Canada, and that must change.

That is why our Conservative government introduced regulations today to strengthen requirements for cribs, cradles and bassinets. These new regulations deal with their construction, as well as their flammability, side height and pinching hazards. These regulations will make all cribs, cradles and bassinets sold in Canada safer. Our government puts Canadian families first.

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[English]

ACCESS TO MEDICINES

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is World AIDS Day, and in communities such as Hamilton, grandmothers are gathering in support of Bill C-393. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that life-saving medicines reach those who need them most. By simplifying the export of cheap, generic, antiretroviral drugs to the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, this bill literally could turn the tide of HIV-AIDS.

Sadly, a few weeks ago, the Liberal opposition teamed up with the Conservative government to gut Bill C-393. In committee, the Liberal-Tory coalition stripped the most critical element, the one-licence provision, from the bill.

While I try to avoid excessive partisanship, this is a profoundly partisan matter. There is no sugaring the pill: across Africa, people are dying from preventable diseases. Children are dying from treatable illness. They desperately need the medicines we have and they need them now.

I urge my Liberal and Conservative colleagues to do the right thing. There is no downside. By restoring the one-licence solution and passing the bill immediately, millions of lives can be saved. Brand-name companies will receive royalties for their intellectual property, and generic drug companies will increase their capacity and employment, all without costing Canadian taxpayers a dime.

Rarely do we as MPs have such personal power to save millions of lives. Let us use that power wisely.

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WALK A MILE IN HER SHOES

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about an innovative North American project that involves ending violence against women. In our united quest to end violence against women, the involvement of men and boys is significant.

Since 2001, men from across Canada and the United States have boldly stepped into a pair of stilettos to "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" to stop violence against women.

Oral Questions

I respectfully request all of my colleagues to participate in this event in their communities. It is organized by the YWCAs across our country. YWCA Canada advocates improving the lives of women and girls. One of its top priorities is to stop violence against women.

Together, women and men, boys and girls, we can and will end violence against women and improve the quality of life for all Canadians in communities across the country.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have done the walk in my riding, and I did it in a pair of stilettos.

* * *

[Translation]

HIV-AIDS

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the face of HIV-AIDS has changed dramatically in 20 years and, although treatment, particularly triple therapy, now allows those suffering from this disease to live longer, this epidemic is not yet a thing of the past.

According to the Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 18,000 people in Quebec are infected but 25% of them are unaware that they have an infection. In addition, one quarter of newly infected individuals are between the ages of 45 and 54, and, according to the Clinique médicale l'Actuel in Montreal, newly infected individuals over the age of 50 could represent close to 50% of its clients by 2017.

In order to change society's perception of this disease and reduce the isolation and stigmatization experienced by those suffering from it, phenomena that are only accentuated by the fact that these individuals are aging, this week, COCQ-SIDA launched a campaign entitled "And if I were seropositive?" involving four Quebec celebrities. The organization thus invites us to think about whether we would question the talent of these celebrities if we knew that they were seropositive.

The battle against HIV-AIDS is far from over. On World AIDS Day, it is more important than ever to raise awareness and focus on prevention of this disease so that we can finally put an end to prejudice.

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[English]

QUEBEC SPORTS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, Red Fisher was inducted into the Quebec Sports Hall of Fame. Red has been writing for an unbelievable 56 years, first for the *Montreal Star*, and now for the *Gazette*. He respects what he writes about and respects his audience. He has never made himself more important than the game he covers. When others have decided they have "been there, done that", Red is still able and willing to get angered, to get excited, and to see something new.

He can be tough. At times he was not very impressed with me, but it was because he knew I could do better; and every time I could not find my own answers, I would wait for the morning paper to see what Red thought.

There is no hockey public in the world more knowledgeable than Montreal's. It is this public that sets the standard against which the Canadiens must compete and has been crucial to the team's success. No one has been more important in helping to sustain this standard than Red. Simply, day after day, year after year, Red is the best.

We congratulate Red and thank him.

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● (1420)

FERRY SERVICES

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that yesterday this government announced an investment to extend ferry services in eastern Canada.

Our government understands the importance of these ferry services to the local communities and the economy. They are a vital link between our eastern provinces and are crucial to the economic health of the region. I am pleased that our government will assist in providing safe and effective transportation for the many people in these communities who depend on it. I am proud that we are supporting our eastern transport, trade and tourism industries.

In addition to yesterday's commitment, we have also made significant investments in the regional transportation system, including: substantial funding for the highway and road network in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and P.E.I.; significant support for the Confederation Bridge; and further investments in regional air and other marine transportation services and facilities.

I am proud to say that this government is standing up for eastern Canada after years of Liberal inaction.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

SENIORS

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the same government that is spending billions of dollars on prisons and untended fighter jets and is giving the richest corporations billions of dollars in gifts has also cut benefits to seniors. The Prime Minister denies the facts, but in an email sent on October 21, the minister defended the cuts made to the guaranteed income supplement for our most vulnerable seniors.

Why is the government going after vulnerable seniors? When will the Prime Minister fix this mistake?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not at all the case. This government has been the most successful in increasing seniors' incomes in Canada. I am thinking, for example, of the historic decision to allow income splitting for seniors who receive pensions.

Unfortunately, the Liberal Party voted against these measures for our seniors.

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have two problems here: the heartlessness of the government and the refusal of it to admit in the House what it is doing.

The Prime Minister denies the facts, but in a message on October 21, the minister clearly commits to cutting the GIS. Poverty among seniors is increasing, yet the government is cutting benefits to the most vulnerable seniors in our population.

How can the Prime Minister justify these priorities to vulnerable Canadians?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Of course, Mr. Speaker, completely the opposite is correct. This is the government that has increased the age credit for our senior citizens. It has increased the pension deduction for our senior citizens. It has allowed the historic decision to allow seniors to split their pension income. It has allowed those who receive the guaranteed income supplement to earn even more money.

This government has an unblemished record of increasing benefits for our senior citizens. Unfortunately, in every single case, it has been the Liberal Party that voted against these benefits for our seniors.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is not denying what is plainly in writing in his minister's letter of October 21 and it is time for him to answer the question about the GIS.

The government refuses to help disabled Nortel pensioners. It is cutting the GIS. It seems to have money for prisons, it seems to have money for planes, it has the money for corporate tax breaks, but when it comes to finding support for seniors, suddenly it is out of dough. Why?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, guess what? Unlike the previous Liberal government, this government can equip our armed forces and can put criminals in prison and also support our senior citizens.

In terms of the particular matter the Leader of the Opposition raises, there was a court decision that was intended to reserve GIS for those who are the poorest and vulnerable. Some changes were made administratively in HRSDC that may have overreached that objective and the minister has made clear that she has cancelled those changes.

* * *

FINANCE

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the record of the finance minister must feel like a recurring nightmare for those in Ontario who lived through his first kick at the can. His Harris government fired inspectors, leading to the Walkerton tragedy. He fired thousands of nurses. He closed more than 20 hospitals. He drove up deficits, saddling future generations with a mountain of debt. All he left of Ontario's cooked books was a smouldering ruin.

Why can the finance minister not see that this rerun of failed policies are hurting Canadians? How can the Prime Minister keep this two-time financial offender in his cabinet?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure where the hon. member was in the 1990s. I know her leader was not in Canada. I did not realize she was not, either.

Do you know what happened in the 1990s, Mr. Speaker? The Liberal federal government decided that it would balance its budget on the backs of the provinces. Those of us who were working in the provinces at that time, including the member for Toronto Centre who has said this, suffered through those cuts to the provinces. What were the cuts in? They were in health care, education—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Random—Burin—St. George's.

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the truth hurts.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. The hon. member for Random—Burin—St. George's has the floor. We will have a little order, please.

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, this is a finance minister who cannot admit the truth. This Queen's Park denier's historical rewrite did not fool Ontarians and it will not fool Canadians. Next he will be telling us that there is no \$54 billion deficit; that he never hired crony speech writers; that he did not cut food inspectors, leading to listeriosis; that there was no fake lake; that there was no income trust flip-flop; and that seniors have been better off under his watch.

When will the minister stop his sorry excuses? Why do Canadians have to suffer again for his failures?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is apparent that the member for Random—Burin—St. George's did not experience in Newfoundland the cuts that were done by the federal Liberal government in the 1990s, but I can tell her that the people of Ontario did.

We felt it having to reduce the number of teachers and the number of nurses, and not being able to build the hospitals that the people of Ontario needed. I know the member for Toronto Centre lived through that. Apparently the member from Newfoundland did not.

The people of Ontario in Vaughan voted earlier this week because they remembered.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when asked about the transfer of children to the Afghan secret service, the Conservative government replied that the transfer protocol has been changed, that the children were transferred to a juvenile detention centre and that 280 visits were conducted. That is important information, but there is one piece of information missing.

How many children were captured and handed over to Afghan authorities?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, when Taliban insurgents kill and injure Canadian soldiers and it is suspected that these Taliban are under 18, there are special procedures. There is supervision and special detention. We have not been informed of any cases of abuse of these prisoners.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows many things. He knows that there has been no abuse. He knows that there are special detention centres. He knows that there is a new transfer protocol. He knows that there may be some prisoners under 18 years of age. He knows all this. Surely he must know how many children have been transferred. Will this show up on WikiLeaks or somewhere else?

Could he tell us before we get this information from other sources? It seems a simple thing to me to say how many children have been transferred. He knows so many things; he must know this.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the objective of our policies is to protect the Afghan people and the safety of our soldiers. At the same time, we must ensure that prisoners are treated in a manner that respects our international obligations. According to our information, that has happened in all the cases referred to by the Bloc leader.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the government announced that the mission in Afghanistan would be extended, the November 16 press release stated, and I quote: "The Canadian Forces will support training of the Afghan National Security Forces by providing up to 950 trainers and support personnel...at facilities centred on Kabul".

But Lieutenant-General Marc Lessard contradicted that information this morning, saying that a number of Canadian soldiers will have to work outside Kabul.

Are they trying to hide something from us? How many military personnel will be deployed outside Kabul and what will their role be?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say once again that the government is complying in every respect with the resolution that was passed here in March. We will end our combat mission in Kandahar next year, in July. We will replace that mission with a contingent of 950 Canadian soldiers who will be tasked with training. I would like to remind the hon. members that this training will be based in Kabul.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is not what Lieutenant-General Lessard said this morning. He said that they will be stationed elsewhere.

Former Chief of Defence Staff Rick Hillier said that it is heresy to consider training the Afghan army without going into combat with them. That is what he said in the newspapers.

Does the decision to have troops serve outside Kabul not confirm exactly what Rick Hillier said? The government cannot say that it is training the military and, at the same time, say that it is not going into the theatre of operations with them. That is just not done, according to General Hillier. What is the government's response?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is asking questions and he ought to listen a little to the answers. The Government of Canada's policy is established here. I explained the government's policy to him a few moments ago. Nine hundred and fifty soldiers, trainers, will be based primarily in Kabul.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is more bad economic news. The trade deficit is soaring, our over-valued dollar is pricing Canadian goods right out of world markets, and our economy is almost at a standstill, growing at a mere fraction of the rate of the U.S. economy.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that the promised jobs from the stimulus program have not been realized, a big surprise there.

Instead of bringing the recovery effort to a halt, why will the Prime Minister not extend the stimulus program to create jobs?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to answer a question about jobs. Unlike other advanced industrial economies, Canada's economy has recouped almost all of the jobs lost during the recession. In fact, there are 430,000 more people working today than there were a year and a half ago.

In terms of the stimulus program itself, we know for example that 200,000 jobs have been created just through the work sharing in the EI program alone.

I think this is a record to be proud of. That is why we are strongly supportive of Canada's economic action plan. We are obviously working with our partners to finish stimulus projects.

[Translation]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, numbers do not lie. The Conservatives were way off in their projections for job creation. There are 250,000 fewer jobs per year than they predicted, which would translate into salaries totalling \$11 billion every year.

Oral Questions

Why does the Prime Minister continue giving the gift of tax cuts to large corporations? When will we see more full-time jobs created? When will we see some help for SMEs, for the industries of the future and for research and development? Where is the activity we need right now?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a big difference between our government and the opposition coalition, and our objection to tax increases. On the contrary, we support tax cuts and will continue lowering taxes, and we are achieving positive results compared to others. Unlike other countries, our economy has created jobs over the past year and a half. We have created 430,000 jobs in Canada thanks to our tax cuts.

[*English*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives just are not listening. The fact is the economic stimulus is not creating the jobs that they are talking about. The economy is bleeding away billions of dollars in lost salaries.

Think of the economic impact that those wages could have had in stimulating this economy, Mr. Speaker. It is a lost opportunity. In Austria, the Netherlands and Germany, the unemployment rate is dramatically lower than it is here. It shows that we can be doing better and they do not depend on the tar sands to create the jobs.

When will the government come to its senses and extend the stimulus deadlines, restart the stalled economy and get people back to work?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hope the leader of the NDP goes home tonight and actually listens to his question. Having said the government's policies are a failure, he demands that we extend them.

The NDP is a party that voted against the economic action plan, now understands that it is a success and wants us to move forward. As we have said, we will be flexible in dealing with our partners on the stimulus deadline.

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TASEKO MINES LIMITED

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the decision to stop Taseko's Prosperity mine involved five cabinet ministers. Each must answer for the cabinet leak that left Taseko's shares plunging and insiders getting rich.

I ask the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, when did she sign off on the Taseko mine rejection? Who in her office knew about the decision? Has her office handed over any and all information about the deal to the RCMP and the PCO?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there the member for Ajax—Pickering goes again, speculating, making wild accusations.

It was only on October 8 that he had to stand in his place and apologize and retract statements on other smears that he has made. We will await those similar apologies in the future.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after seven weeks of doing nothing, the government needs to start

providing answers. It should be sorry to the investors who lost their shirts and are getting those kinds of answers from the government.

I am directing these questions to specific ministers. Are they capable or even allowed to answer the questions? Do they need the protection of a human cabinet shield, or will they stand in their place and provide answers?

I ask the Minister of Indian Affairs, when did he sign off on the Taseko mine rejection? Who in his office knew about the decision? Has his office handed over any and all information to the RCMP and the PCO?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite has any information on this issue that he would like to place before the House after question period, we certainly would be prepared to agree to that. If the member opposite wants to expand on his wild speculations, let him have the intellectual honesty and the courage of his convictions to step outside and make any accusations he would like to make.

• (1440)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me give this a try in French.

We know that the cabinet decision to block Taseko Mines' Prosperity project was made via a walk around, which means that four ministers had to sign off on it for it to be considered a cabinet decision. The Taseko affair is within the purview of the following five departments: Environment, Natural Resources, Indian and Northern Affairs, Fisheries and Oceans and Finance. My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

When did he sign off on rejecting the project? Who in his office knew about it? Did his office provide information about this matter to the RCMP and the Privy Council? Is he brave enough to stand?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is all speculation on the part of the Liberal Party. If the member for Bourassa has any real information, he should place it before the House after question period.

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Finance try to hide behind the government House leader too? He usually manages to speak for himself. I would like him to answer the questions.

When did he sign off on rejecting the project? Who in his office knew about the decision? Most importantly, did he get information from his department about this matter? Did his office provide information about this matter to the RCMP and the Privy Council Office? This is not complicated.

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member has specific information to back up this speculation, I would encourage him to place it before the House after question period. If he has specific accusations, he should raise them in the House after question period.

*Oral Questions***COPYRIGHT**

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, about 100 Quebec artists came to Parliament Hill, calling for protection of their copyright. The Conservative government, as insensitive as ever to Quebec's concerns, rejected their basic demands with respect to digital levies.

A Conservative organizer in northern Montreal, the former riding president in Montcalm, even wrote on his Facebook page, and I quote, "I am sick of artists...take your demands and shove them." That is the end of the Conservative quote.

Is that not the very essence of the Conservative government's position?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's policy on this issue is in Bill C-32. We are also in talks with the Government of Quebec. In fact, I had a meeting with Ms. St-Pierre this week. Yesterday, I spoke with the Union des artistes and I stressed to them that this bill addresses the interests of both consumers and artists.

This is what the Canadian Film and Television Production Association had to say: "We applaud this Conservative government's copyright reforms."

This is a balanced, responsible bill that is in the best interests of all Canadians.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this bill is unbalanced and irresponsible. Yesterday the artists said so themselves.

Among this delegation of artists was Claude Robinson, who fought a 15-year battle to have the courts recognize his copyright. He is a real symbol for copyright in Quebec. His presence reminded us that Bill C-32 transforms all creators into thousands of Claude Robinsons who will be left on their own to fight for their intellectual property rights and for fair compensation.

Is it not time to make significant changes to Bill C-32 to establish a fair balance between distributors and creators?

[English]

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we say that the balance exists already in Bill C-32. We balanced the rights and obligations of the government to protect those in the creative economy and also those of consumers.

We protect the rights of creators. We make piracy illegal in Canada. We also impose the international WIPO treaties. We also have limited fair dealing in this bill. We also protect the rights of creators to impose technological protection measures to protect what it is that they are creating.

We also stand up for consumers by having a notice and notice regime. We stand up for consumers by saying no to a massive new tax on iPods, cellphones, BlackBerrys and laptops.

We believe in balance and what is in the best interests of consumers and creators.

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, regarding the infrastructure program, the Government of Quebec, the National Assembly, the Union des municipalités du Québec and the Fédération québécoise des municipalités oppose piecemeal solutions. They are asking that the March 31, 2011, deadline be extended for all infrastructure projects because 353 projects are in danger. The municipalities could be stuck with an additional bill for over \$200 million.

The minister keeps repeating that there will be an announcement soon. Will the government stop fueling the uncertainty and push back the March 31, 2011, deadline?

• (1445)

[English]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course we have been listening to all of the provinces.

About three weeks ago, we finally received the data from Quebec that gave us an analysis on a project-by-project basis of the status of all those projects in Quebec. That information is essential as we do the analysis of what we need to do to look after the needs of the proponents.

The Prime Minister has already said today that not only are we going to be fair and reasonable but we are going to be flexible. We hope to have an announcement very soon.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, several municipalities in Quebec could lose all of their funding because it will be impossible to complete all work before the deadline. In my riding, that is the case in the municipality of Sainte-Élisabeth, which will not be able to complete a major paving project.

Will the government finally listen to the Quebec municipalities and push back the March 31, 2011, deadline, as called for by the municipality of Sainte-Élisabeth in particular?

[English]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important to remember the history of this. When we approached Quebec and asked how it wanted to deal with this, it said to make the deadline December 31. That was the first thing, way earlier than our deadline. Then Quebec attached an engineer's certificate saying it could complete the project by December 31.

Oral Questions

We have already said we will extend it to March 31. That is easily done because that is the federal program. More importantly, we have been working with Madame Courchesne and other ministers in the Quebec government in a respectful way. Understanding now the severity of the problem, we are working closely to find solutions so that we can be fair, reasonable and flexible.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Finance is the biggest spender and has created the largest deficit in our history.

He is wasting millions of dollars on fake lakes and ministerial whims and billions of dollars on untendered fighter jets and he has the gall to say that the recession caused the deficit. He has the gall to want to make our seniors pay for the billions he has wasted.

Will the Minister of Finance finally admit that he has lost all control of this orgy of waste?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is just the opposite, of course. The stimulus spending was necessary and it was supported by Parliament. It was necessary to protect our country. The member's party supported it.

It was necessary to run a deficit. Why was it necessary to run a deficit? It was to protect our country and to protect jobs. In fact, we gained back all of the jobs lost during the recession as a result of the economic action plan.

I do not know why the member would complain about it two years later.

[Translation]

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did not vote for untendered contracts for fighter jets. This minister is living on a cloud surrounded by untendered fighter jets.

Canadians' personal debt is hitting record highs. National debt is exploding. Jobs are still hard to come by. And the Minister of Finance is authorizing the purchase of fighter jets without a single job guarantee?

How dare this joke of a minister applaud himself for a job well done. Does the Minister of Finance really want to duplicate the disaster he created in Ontario on a national scale?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the program to purchase the new jet fighters was begun by the party of the member opposite.

However, let us listen to what the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada had to say, just a week ago, about the ability to compete for the production of 3,000 to 5,000 aircraft internationally:

This amount represents more than \$12 Billion in opportunities on the partner's fleet....

It goes on to encourage all members of the House to support the nearly 150,000 direct, indirect and induced jobs that it would generate.

I do not know why the members opposite in the Liberal Party have changed their position on support for this great initiative.

* * *

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a new report from Global Insight tells us that Canada is actually falling behind the already weak U.S. economy. More Canadians are out of work and are struggling with record levels of personal debt.

The same finance minister who lectures Canadian families about risky spending has allowed costs for Conservative ministerial staff to explode by seven times the rate of inflation.

Why is he ballooning Conservative office budgets while leaving Canadian families out in the cold?

● (1450)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite must be the only person in Canada who thinks the American economy is doing better than the Canadian economy.

Let us talk about employment and unemployment. The United States unemployment rate is about 9.6%. The Canadian rate is less than 8%. That has not happened in Canadian history since 1975. That is because we had a good stimulus plan, which was supported by the member's party at a time of economic crisis in this country and which has worked.

The member should applaud the plan and applaud Canada's economic performance.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unemployment in Canada is two points higher than when that finance minister took office.

The finance minister killed a Liberal bill to protect disabled pensioners. His latest move to cut low-income seniors benefits will put many seniors out on the streets.

We know that the minister is on the record in support of putting the homeless in jail. Is that why he is saying no to low-income seniors and disabled pensioners but yes to spending billions of their tax dollars on U.S.-style mega-prisons?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear. No government has done more to help Canada's seniors, those who built our country, than this government.

Let us take a look at the Liberal record compared to ours.

We brought forward pension income splitting. They voted against it.

We brought forward increasing the age credit, not once but twice, to help seniors keep more money in their pockets. The Liberals voted against it.

Oral Questions

We also brought forward an additional \$10 million for the new horizons programs that help seniors stay active and contribute within their communities. What happened with the Liberals? They voted against it. Shame on them.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Tim Uppal (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, queue jumpers are paying human smugglers to abuse Canada's immigration system. Our country is being treated like a doormat. Canadians are sick and tired of illegal human smuggling boats coming to our shores. Yet the Liberals are siding with the immigration industry rather than ordinary Canadians by refusing to get tough on human smuggling.

I ask the minister, why are the Liberals so out of touch with ordinary Canadians on human smuggling?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that Canadians expect this Parliament to take tough and reasonable action to stop human smuggling syndicates from targeting this country and treating it like a doormat. That is why we brought forward Bill C-49, a strong but reasonable effort to stop the smuggling syndicates from targeting Canada.

The Liberals pretended they might be in favour of these measures prior to this week's byelections. However, as soon as those elections were behind them, they revealed their opposition to the crackdown on human smuggling and queue jumping. That is an irresponsible position.

We stand with the Canadian people and against the smugglers trying to—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

* * *

RELEASE OF DOCUMENTS BY WIKILEAKS

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's former chief of staff is advocating targeted assassination of a civilian, in reaction to the leak of U.S. documents.

These comments are quickly becoming an international embarrassment.

Mr. Flanagan is known as the ideological mentor of the Prime Minister. He concocted many key Conservative policies and is a talking head of the Conservatives.

Will the government unequivocally condemn Mr. Flanagan and his reckless comments?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Flanagan speaks only for himself. He does not speak for the government. He is not an adviser to the Prime Minister and has not been for many years. I certainly do not share his views.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has been refusing to acknowledge the facts on child detainees. Despite the claim of changes in 2007, it is clear that the government only stopped handing children over to the NDS in Afghanistan in March 2010. We know it is not just those who kill or attack Canadians who are detained in Afghanistan.

When will the government tell the truth? When will the minister tell the House and all Canadians how many children were handed over to the NDS and what happened to them? When will the minister give us the straight answers Canadians deserve on child detainees?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the House, our men and women in uniform and our civilians have performed admirably well and with honour in Afghanistan.

We detain only those individuals who attack or pose a credible threat to those people who are working in Afghanistan.

We transfer to Afghan partners in line with our international obligations. We monitor that transfer. I indicated yesterday that we have done close to 280 visits. These visits are done on a random basis.

* * *

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

FIRST NATIONS

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, although first nations communities are growing rapidly and education needs are critical, the federal government has been maintaining the 2% cap on education funding applied in 1996. The Bloc Québécois introduced Bill C-599 so that the Conservative government would work with first nations communities to develop an education funding plan that takes into account the needs of those communities.

Does the government recognize that its investments in education do not correspond to the needs of the first nations?

[*English*]

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the bill tabled by the Bloc member today. We have no idea when or if it will be debated in this place.

The government does understand the importance of education for first nations. We are committed to improving it in partnership with first nations, the provinces and the territories.

Since 2006 we have invested over \$700 million in more than 100 school projects, with another 100 under way. We launched the education partnership program and the first nations student success program. Most of this is over and above—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Oral Questions[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with unanimous consent, this bill could be passed very quickly.

By signing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Canadian government has recognized that these people have a right to better education. This recognition is not merely symbolic; the government must take action and must make massive investments to give first nations access to quality education.

Will the government finally take action?

[*English*]

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have done more than our share on first nations education. We are working in tripartite arrangements. We are working to improve K to 12. We are working on post-secondary education. We came to an agreement on First Nations University of Canada.

We are doing everything we can to ensure better educational outcomes.

* * *

[*Translation*]**INFRASTRUCTURE**

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer will soon be publishing an update on the infrastructure stimulus fund. He will probably confirm that a good number of projects are in jeopardy across the country. Recreational facilities in communities such as Sainte-Marie and Trois-Pistoles are at risk, as well as the Pat Burns arena, announced by the Prime Minister himself.

When will this government finally announce the across-the-board extension of its arbitrary deadline?

[*English*]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I saw the newspaper report as well. We are looking forward to the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report. I am sure it is going to show that over 92% of these projects are going to get completed by March 31. That is already a given. Ninety-two per cent is an A+.

In addition to that, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has said this has created tens of thousands of jobs. Where would we be without that? It has contributed to more than 430,000 net new jobs for Canadians.

I will be announcing very soon how we are going to deal with that March 31 deadline, because we are going to be fair, reasonable and flexible.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government keeps telling us to wait and see. Owen Sound's arena will only be 50% done in March and the City of Ottawa will be on the hook for millions of dollars in roadwork.

If the minister is so fair and flexible, then why are his Conservative members in the transport committee filibustering a Liberal motion to extend the deadline? That is not fair. It is obstruction and it is all about jobs. Why will they not extend the deadline?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting approach by the member. First, he says that the infrastructure stimulus was just a bad idea. Then he says that it was a good idea, but it just was not done right. Now he says that it is creating so many dang jobs that we have to get it and extend it. Here we go again.

The Conference Board of Canada says that in Ontario alone the increased infrastructure spending preserved about 70,000 jobs in the province last year.

We are getting the job done and we are working closely with the province and with proponents. Now that we have the data in place, we will be able to show how fair, reasonable and flexible we will be. I will make an announcement very soon.

* * *

● (1500)

[*Translation*]**HIV-AIDS**

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 16,000 people will die of AIDS today because they do not have access to medication. The NDP's bill to amend the Patent Act would have solved the problem, but the Conservatives and the Liberals removed the clause that would have enabled generic drug producers to supply all developing countries under a single licence.

Why refuse to help people dying of AIDS?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada will be the next country to provide over \$1 billion to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Canada will double its international aid to \$5 billion for 2010-11 and will support important initiatives, such as the Canadian international immunization initiative and the AIDS initiative.

[*English*]

That is our record. We are here to do good things that actually make a difference. Unfortunately the NDP bill would do nothing to do that.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, on World AIDS Day, more than 16,000 men, women and children will die in the developing world because they cannot get affordable generic drugs. New Democrats have introduced a bill to get the antiviral drugs to five million people who desperately need them. The brand name drug companies only have 2% of the African market, so right now their profits will not be impacted by the bill.

The government needs to decide if it is more interested in saving lives or protecting the brand name drug profits. Which is it?

Oral Questions

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned already, Canada is at the forefront of assisting those who are in need. In fact, in many cases, we have doubled our efforts under this government.

However, the changes proposed by the NDP will do nothing to address the issues of access to medicine. In fact, what they do is revoke intellectual property rights and remove important steps in ensuring the safety and efficacy of the drugs being exported.

We are for action that actually works. That is what we have done and that is what we will continue to do.

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PRODUCT SAFETY

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Health announced amendments to the cribs and cradles regulations of the Hazardous Products Act. Canada's requirements are among the most stringent in the world. How will the amendments further strengthen these safety requirements?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of young children is a top priority of our government, which is why Canada's requirements for cribs and cradles are among the most stringent in the world.

Our amendments will further strengthen our existing safety requirements and introduce new standards for bassinets, which up until now were unregulated in Canada. As a parent, I know these new regulations will give peace of mind to parents, particularly to those with newborns.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is World AIDS Day, a day to reflect upon where we are as a country and as individuals and to recommit, once and for all, to eradicating this terrible disease. Yet it is with sadness that we learn the Conservative government has cut funding to a number of HIV-AIDS projects specifically targeted for aboriginal peoples.

As aboriginal people are one of the most vulnerable groups to HIV infection in the nation, when will the government restore this vital funding?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to a comprehensive, long-term approach to address HIV-AIDS in Canada and around the world.

The Canadian HIV vaccine initiative, led by our government along with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, highlights Canada's world-class HIV vaccine research expertise. In fact, I am pleased to inform the House that I announced today the appointment of Dr. Singh as co-chair of the advisory board that will oversee the renewed Canadian HIV vaccine initiative and its research and development alliance.

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government once again stood out at the United Nations climate change conference in Cancun by sweeping first, second and third place fossil awards. More than 400 international organizations vote on the awards, which go to the countries that have done the most to block or undermine climate negotiations.

Why is the government getting in the way of international efforts to fight climate change instead of helping develop a binding plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

• (1505)

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada supports the binding international agreement, including all the major emitters, all the large emitters. In Cancun we will be working hard in the areas of financing, mitigation, adaptation, technology and, most important, accountability for all countries.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week the minister said the much ballyhooed exploratory process for first nations citizenship amounted to paying national aboriginal organizations to collect more data and submit more reports. This was not what was promised. People demand and deserve more from the government.

Will the minister stop dithering and agree to a transparent process, on the public record, where stakeholders sit down and develop practical solutions around citizenship?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in terms of the exploratory process we will launch once Bill C-3 becomes law, assuming it does, it is an exercise that will be led by the national aboriginal organizations. They will set the terms of reference for the most part.

I do not understand where the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan is coming from on that.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, roads are being repaired, taxes are being lowered, workers are being retrained and clearly Canada's plan is working.

Points of Order

The global economic recovery is fragile. That is why our government's number one priority is jobs and economic growth, not job-killing tax hikes, as the opposition proposes, which the Chamber of Commerce labelled a "disastrous idea". Our government is on the right track.

Would the hon. finance minister please give Parliament an update on the latest economic data?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Statistics Canada reported that our economy grew again for the fifth straight quarter. We have also seen 430,000 net new jobs created since the end of the recession. These are both signs that our economic action plan is working and that we are on the right track.

While we are not out of the woods yet, Canada is in a better place than most. This is what the *Wall Street Journal* said yesterday about our country. It said Canada, "has pulled through the downturn in better shape than most of its peers, with the healthiest banking system and strongest economic recovery".

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during question period today, the member for Ajax—Pickering questioned the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans about an alleged cabinet leak that may have affected the share prices when that matter was dealt with by cabinet.

The minister did not answer. The government House leader told the member to take the matter outside. That was his answer.

This is question period. It is a legitimate part of our system of parliamentary accountability. Any mechanism that limits a member from asking a legitimate question limits the accountability of this institution. It renders the whole concept of responsible government illusionary. It restricts members from asking legitimate questions and it restricts members and the public from getting legitimate answers.

Every member of the House stands equal. They have the right, and I submit the obligation, to raise and advance issues of the public concern. Any answer that attempts to shift the issue from the parliamentary forum to the legal or the public forum is wrong. It is illegal. It certainly degrades, and I submit denudes, the accountability and answerability functions of the government.

In summary, it undermines the accountability of the House. It violates our collective privileges as a member. It is an assault on the dignity of the House. It is a very serious matter, and I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to rule on that.

• (1510)

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in December 2007 and in February and March of 2008, the member for Ajax—Pickering made very serious allegations in the House, allegations which had no basis. He lacked the courage of his convictions to take responsibility for those actions until March 5. When he did so, he was then forced to come back into the House on October 8, 2010 and "apologize and retract the statements." He had to apologize and retract those statements because they were not true.

The member for Ajax—Pickering misled the House and when he was called before a judge, he had to take accountability for his actions and apologize for his reckless lies.

The Speaker: I think the government House leader is aware that suggesting members have lied is not parliamentary and he should refrain. Whether the judge said so or not has nothing to do with it. The judge did not say it in the House, which is the point. Members can say what they like outside the House, too, but there are limits on what they can say in the House and one of them is referring to other members as the member has.

I know the government House leader will want to withdraw that.

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I withdraw it.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, the response from the government House leader has absolutely nothing to do with my point of order and my point of order has nothing to do with the member for Ajax—Pickering.

The point of order is that the answer is an attack on the dignity of the House. It is a violation of our collective privileges as a member. It is a very serious issue and it is an issue that I, as a member of Parliament, urge you, Mr. Speaker, to rule on.

The Speaker: I am happy to rule. The member pointed out in his statement that members are free to ask questions in the House, and there was no restriction on the member asking his question.

The minister, in his response, may not have answered the question, but it is not the role of the Chair to decide whether a response is an answer or not to the question. Indeed, the Chair has no authority to rule an answer out of order unless the answer contains unparliamentary remarks or a personal attack on some other member.

It is not for the Chair to decide whether the content of a response is in fact an answer. As we have heard many times, that is why it is called question period not answer period. It is commonplace in the House.

While I sympathize with the hon. member's comments, and I know the government House leader might, too, in certain circumstances, it is not for the Chair to decide whether an answer or response given to a question constitutes an answer to that question. It is beyond the competence of the Chair to make that kind of decision under our practice.

For that reason, I do not think the hon. member has a valid point of order in this case.

Points of Order

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also rise on a point of order. It has been the custom and convention of the House, and in fact, a welcome practice, that whenever there is confusion about documents, their existence or what was referred to therein, especially during the course of question period, the House has an opportunity to table those documents through unanimous consent. I would ask the House if I could take an opportunity to table documents that were indeed held in some confusion during question period.

There was reference to an October 21, 2010 letter from the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, which I believe was also copied to the Minister of State (Seniors) for her own information, that was sent to a Canadian senior citizen and investment counsellor regarding changes to the application of eligibility criteria to the guaranteed income supplement program under the Old Age Security Act and the regulations and guidelines therein.

There was some confusion in the House as to whether that memo existed. The Prime Minister said that correspondence did not exist. I am very pleased today to be able to table it for the benefit all members.

I am sure members of the Conservative Party of Canada would not want to embarrass their leader and Prime Minister by denying this opportunity to set the record straight and will give their unanimous consent to table the following letter, which says that the minister responsible for Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, in her correspondence of October 21, 2010, acknowledged not only that her department and she herself changed the eligibility criteria but defended the practice, also giving the following caveat to her decision, which states, “However, in January of 2008, with a tax court case, OAS regulations describe the types of income that qualify as pension income for the purposes of the option provisions of GIS-OAS. Annuity payments such as RRIFs are indeed included in those options.”

She describes that she made a voluntary and discretionary judgment based on a court case that allowed her to do this. It does not say she must do this; it gave her the option to do it.

I will also table for the benefit of members the fact that the court itself said, advised, pleaded with the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development to review the rules—

• (1515)

The Speaker: Order. The member seems not to be telling us which documents he is asking to table but is in fact describing various things in the documents. I would urge him to tell us which documents he is seeking consent to table and I will ask for that consent.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Speaker, I would now ask the House for unanimous consent to table the correspondence of October 21, 2010 from the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development to a Mr. Gerard Lee, as well as the court cases of *Ward v. Canada* and *Drake v. Human Resources* that the Prime Minister referred to during the course of question period.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte have the unanimous consent of the House to table these copies?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, I have noticed over the past 10 years that this dynamic of points of order has been used in ways that I think are not what they were intended for. I want to raise this in the House. This has come up before, when I was on the Board of Internal Economy, which was chaired by you, by members of the opposition and the government. We have raised this concern before and I want to perhaps put forward a suggestion with regard to the idea of points of order and the Standing Orders.

Each member of the House has a copy of the Standing Orders in his or her desk. We have question period in which opposition members can ask the government any questions they want, we have members statements before question period where people can declare what they want, and we have written questions to the House. We also have late shows, where if opposition members do not like the answers they got, they can use that mechanism as well.

Instead of using up time every single day, where we have question period and then, apparently, a rebuttal period, perhaps we should use points of order such that when somebody stands on a point of order, the member should first reference where in the Standing Orders there has been a violation of the protocol of the House and then make the case that the Speaker should appeal to their good judgment that the Standing Orders of the House have been violated.

Points of order are supposed to be about violations of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. Instead, they are being used as a rebuttal period, using up good time that could be used to debate both government and opposition legislation.

The Speaker: I am sure all hon. members sympathize with the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages on this point of order, but I point out that at least in respect of the request for tabling of documents we have had suggestions in recent days that if members want to make allegations, they ought to table documents. So now we are getting more requests for tabling of documents, obviously, in response to suggestions from the other side of the House. On that point of order, though the member may have gone on a little in describing the documents, which I pointed out, we have at least dealt with the issue.

On the other one, there sometimes are points of order as to contents of questions and answers. Sometimes they are not valid. Usually they are not because they are matters of debate, but the Chair will make decisions in respect of these matters and deal with them as necessary.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond and simply say that it is a normal convention of the House. Whenever there is confusion, the production of documents, and the tabling of documents in particular, is built into the Standing Orders as a means of providing greater co-operation and understanding of the issues by all members of the House. I am simply referring to a very long-standing tradition and a long-standing convention.

Routine Proceedings

I know that hon. members would not want to embarrass their leader, the Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, the Prime Minister of Canada, by not allowing those documents to be tabled, especially when their leader denied their very existence.

Therefore, I will ask again, Mr. Speaker, if the unanimous consent could be afforded to table those documents.

• (1520)

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in relation to the supplementary estimates (B), 2010-2011, vote 95b under Canadian Heritage.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 23rd report later today.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

I am pleased to report that the committee has considered the supplementary estimates (B) under Justice for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011 and reports the same.

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in relation to supplementary estimates (B) for 2010-11.

[English]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier today, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move that the first report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, presented to the House on Wednesday, April 14, 2010, be concurred in.

It is an honour for me to move this motion and to have it seconded by the member for Malpeque, and I will be splitting my time with the member for Malpeque on this issue.

If we look at the content of the motion that is before the House, it asks something that is pretty simple. It asks that before we close down the prison farm program, a farm program that has provided invaluable effort to rehabilitate inmates over the last hundred years, the government should provide some modicum of evidence that the program was not working.

In committee it was fairly startling to learn that the Correctional Service of Canada is keeping no statistics when it comes to the effective rehabilitation of inmates who complete programs. It also keeps no statistics on whether those individuals were able to get jobs when they were released. Further, it keeps no statistics even on the costing of the program. The Conservatives refused throughout the debate in committee to provide what exactly was the cost of the prison farm program and how much money we would specifically save.

This motion asks that, before the government moves forward, in each of those areas they demonstrate that the program was not effective. Here is the reason. As I and our critic for agriculture had the opportunity to travel the country, we came to see really the most effective program that we have in corrections at helping inmates rehabilitate.

At the end of their sentence, just before they are released, inmates are given the opportunity to work in the prison farm program. It is a program that lets them work with animals and develop empathy. It lets them build the compassion that comes from working with another living thing. As we have seen in research from other jurisdictions, this type of work is now on the leading edge of making sure that when inmates are released they do not reoffend. At the bottom line, is that not what public safety really is all about, making sure that crimes do not happen either in the first place, or in this case, when somebody is being released from prison, that it does not happen again?

Routine Proceedings

I had the opportunity to meet with the men who went through the prison farm program, to look into their eyes and see the difference it made in their lives, how transformational it was. I heard from a gentleman who was in a terrible situation. No one can excuse his crime, but it was not an easy situation. He was 19 years old. He had a step-parent who was abusing his mother, and through a confrontation when alcohol was involved, there was manslaughter. He took the life of the person who was abusing his mother, a crime he deeply regrets, but a situation that was deeply regrettable.

He talked about how the prison farm program changed him as a person, made him stronger, not just how it built empathy but the process of voluntarily, and understand that this program is voluntary, getting up at five in the morning and going to a farm and putting in 10 hours of work. They get to know the dignity of a job well done and understand the structure of work. For individuals who never really had that structure in their life before, it becomes transformative. In so many different ways, this individual was able to articulate how it made a difference in his life.

Then I talked to correctional officials, people who have been working in the prison farms in many cases for longer than 30 years. They told us there is no more effective program in corrections than the prison farm program. In every instance where I talked to a correctional official, they said when it came to the prison farm program there was not a single incident of violent recidivism. It is absolutely stunning that the government would axe a program that is that effective.

Its rationale ostensibly was twofold; one was the cost. Let us look at the cost.

The government is embarking on chasing after California, spending tens of billions of dollars on megaprisons, locking people up for longer and longer following a Republican model that leads to less safe communities and turns prisons into crime factories. It turns them into crime factories specifically because people go in for crimes, and instead of getting better, they face reduced or cut back programs. Conservatives are willing to spend billions of dollars on all these new prisons, but when it comes to a program that is effective and is proven to work, a model internationally, they do not have the dollars. How much are we talking about? The government tells us it is \$4 million, but it will not give us a breakdown of that \$4 million.

• (1525)

The Conservatives tell us no one is being laid off as a result of these closures. They tell us that they are now going to have to go to market to buy the milk and eggs that the program now provides for Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes. Yet, they say that somehow there is a mysterious \$4 million to save, on which they cannot give us any information.

Even if it does save \$4 million, that represents two fake lakes. That is barely more than a second of G8 and G20 spending in a weekend. It is a pittance compared to how the government blows money.

The second rationale, aside from cost, is that agriculture is a dead industry, if members can believe it. Conservative ministers have stood up and said that agriculture is a dead-end, that people do not

need to learn those skills as there is no future in it. I think a lot of Canadians would find that offensive. It also misses a fundamental point.

I have visited most penitentiaries in this country. For example, I have visited a literacy program in a penitentiary. I talked with those going through the program. We do not expect most inmates to become writers, but we do understand that the basic skills of literacy are an essential component to getting a job and having a future. Similarly, I have visited prison programs where inmates sew pockets onto materials to be used by our soldiers, or sweep floors. I do not ask how many will get a job sewing pockets on garments. I do not ask how many will get a job sweeping floors. Instead, I ask about the base skills they are getting. For those inmates who have not had the opportunity to find the structure of work and the pride that comes from putting in a full day's work, this type of experience is one that makes a huge difference.

I cannot help but reflect upon something the member for Malpeque once said to me. He visited a prison farm and there was a cow that had foot rot. In normal circumstances the cow would have been put down. He reflected upon the fact that it was the inmates who asked that the animal not be killed and that it be protected. They had become so close to that animal and had built so much empathy through that process that they had rallied around the animal. They wanted to nurse it back to health and take care of it.

I cannot help but think that if somebody is about to be released from prison, that would be the kind of person we would want the person to be when he or she walks out those doors. Let us remember that more than 90% of those who go to prison come back out. Shutting down programs like this is a travesty.

This is just a continuation of other things the government is doing.

Take a look at the fact that the crime prevention budget has been cut by more than 70%. Groups such as the boys and girls clubs and churches have been providing services to youth trying to get them to turn away from a dark path and not commit those crimes in the first place and not wind up in prison. The Conservatives have slashed money to those programs.

Similarly, the victims of crime initiative has had a 42% slash of its budget. This is a program that helps break cycles of violence and victimization. Often the people who commit crimes themselves have been victimized in their lives. By cutting funding there, the government is refusing to break that cycle of victimization that can so often happen.

The government is slashing from things that stop crime, that keep communities safe, and is dumping more and more money into prisons with fewer and fewer programs.

If that were not enough, the government has now announced it is going to violate international conventions to which Canada is a signatory and proceed with double-bunking. The government says there is nothing wrong with double-bunking, despite the fact that in many provincial facilities double-bunking is not only happening, but it is becoming the norm. In some cases, it is triple-bunking.

Routine Proceedings

I talked to provincial corrections officials in some provinces where they are literally transforming the library into prison space. Prison guards are stepping over inmates at night to count them.

One could say, who cares? “Stack them on top of each other”, the Conservatives would say. “Make the conditions as deplorable as possible”.

The problem is, they get out. People will come out of that system that is broken, that has no focus on rehabilitation, that stacks inmates on top of each other and cuts all of the programs, or never invested in them in the first place, that cuts prevention programs and programs that help victims. And what type of people do the Conservatives think will walk out that door?

• (1530)

When I was in St. John's, Newfoundland, I went to Her Majesty's penitentiary and took a look at the deplorable conditions that so many people with serious mental illness are also facing. This point is just further illustrated.

We dealt with this in the public safety committee. The government sees no problem with solitary confinement. Inmates who are suffering from mental health illnesses are put into isolation where their condition degenerates and they get much worse. Our prisons are not hospitals so they are kept there. The disturbing thing again is that they are just released on to the streets. Because they are mentally ill and their condition has become even worse, and because the government puts no money into proper facilities to help deal with those mental illnesses, we end up having high rates of recidivism.

Where is all this leading? It is not as if this is all just conjecture on my part or the part of just about every expert in the country. The reality is this has been tried before, this cancelling of effective programs, building of mega-prisons, double-bunking, stuffing people in with each other. It was tried in places like California and other states in the United States. The result there was that it sucked like a vacuum money out of health care and education. It sucked money away from infrastructure and for helping those who were in need. What it left was a recidivism rate in California of over 70%.

We need programs like the prison farm program. We have to take action.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was a pleasure for me and my colleague to tour quite a number of prison farms in the Kingston, Ontario area, New Brunswick, Manitoba and other areas.

I wonder if he could elaborate on the dairy herd at the penitentiary farm in Kingston. What was enlightening was the pride the inmates took in looking after the dairy herd and in providing milk and other food products to other institutions in Ontario and Quebec.

My colleague met with the mayor and town council in Kingston. He also met with people who are part of the group, Save the Prison Farms. I wonder if he could expand a bit more on what it means for the community to support the continuation of prison farms.

• (1535)

Mr. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I will start with where the member finished, and that is with the Save the Prison Farms coalition. This is a grassroots group that started in Kingston but

spread across the country. This group is largely responsible for people knowing what prison farms are and the difference they can make in people's lives. We owe this group a tremendous debt for standing up against the actions of the government. Many members are correctional employees who risked their jobs to stand up for what they believe in. They were willing to put their livelihood on the line because they believed what the government was doing was fundamentally wrong.

We had the chance to meet with the mayor and council in Kingston who talked about how important this program is. We also had an opportunity to speak at rallies in Kingston and just north of Winnipeg, where literally hundreds of people rallied behind this program because they know how well it works. They have seen first-hand the effect that it has on inmates.

The member is absolutely right to point out the pride that was taken in that dairy herd. Imagine these inmates, many of whom have never had a pet in their life, are now talking about this dairy herd, which is one of the best and most productive in the province. They were proud to take us around and show us the milk production and the poultry operations. We could not help but see that these people get it. They understand what this program means.

The member for Beauséjour was with us when we were in New Brunswick. We were able to see that pride. We had an opportunity to talk to people in the construction industry and elsewhere who wanted to hire these people because they did good work and had an excellent work ethic after having gone through the program.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for moving the motion.

I, too, had the privilege of visiting Rockwood prison farm back in the spring. In my opinion, that was a very successful program. In fact, the authorities were on the verge of closing it down and selling the herds and land. The member is absolutely 100% correct that this is a wrong-headed move on the part of the government.

How does he propose to turn back the clock on this? Once the land and the herds have been sold, how do we resurrect the program?

Mr. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, when the Liberal Party of Canada gets to the other side of this House, when we come into power, we will restore the prison farm program. We will undo the damage that was done here.

I say to those people who are disgusted with what the government has done on the prison farm program, who have gathered across the country, who have fought so hard and who are so disappointed that their voices were not heard, they have been heard. We will have a vote in this place. We will send a message to the Conservative Party that its actions are unacceptable and that the prison farm program, a program that works and is effective, is coming back.

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak in this concurrence debate. I want to expand on some of the comments made by colleague from Ajax—Pickering.

A lot has been learned since the government first decided, against all facts and common sense, to close prison farms. Its agenda is to go the American way and emphasize punishment over rehabilitation. Punishment is an American system that has proven to be one of the worst in actually fighting crime and rehabilitating people.

Let me ask a question. If members were to walk the streets in many of the big cities in the United States or in many of the big cities in Canada, where would they feel safer? I think they would feel safer walking the streets in a Canadian city.

However, when we look at Canada and the United States, in terms of their incarceration rates, the United States incarcerates about six times per capita as many people as Canada does. The United States incarcerates them and has a system that is based on punishment. It has a system of private jails. It has a system of super prisons. However, it is a system that is recognized around the world as one that is not working in terms of preventing crime over the long term, because it does not emphasize the rehabilitation of people.

The government likes these short bills talking about fighting crime. However, what it avoids at all costs, at all times, is facts that would back up its arguments. In fact one of the reasons it has closed down the mandatory census is that it really does not want to have to deal with the substantive facts. The government wants to believe what it wants to believe and does not like arguments based on facts going against it.

However, where the borrow-and-spend government sitting across the way is going with regard to the prison system in this country is that it is looking at spending another \$9 billion or \$10 billion on building more super jails. One of the biggest failures in getting there is closing the prison farms. The excuses the government has used, in terms of closing the prison farms, are really unbelievable.

When the announcement was made to close the prison farms, the former minister of public safety told the public safety committee that, in the view of the government, the funds directed toward the prison farm program could be better used if the resources were “redirected to programs where people could actually gain employable skills, as virtually nobody who went through those prison farms ended up with employable skills...”.

There are several problems with the point that the former minister of public safety made.

There is a great need in the farm community itself for those employable skills learned on the farm. There is a huge shortage of labour in much of the farm community, and we have to bring in people from other countries with those skills to work on those farms. It was a miserable statement to make against people who worked on farms, as if their skills were not of value.

The fact of the matter is that working on prison farms is not just about getting a job on a farm, as Conservative members at the public safety committee tried to make it out to be by asking the Correctional Service Canada people how many people got a job on a farm. They did not dare ask how many people got jobs. That is what working on

these prison farms is all about. It is about learning life skills. It is all about rehabilitation. It is working with others. That is what it is all about.

● (1540)

In terms of rehabilitation, and my colleague mentioned it earlier, there is just nothing like working with livestock to give one a better sense of life.

I recall at the prison farm in Kingston I ran into an old gentleman who was in prison for life for some very serious crimes. When I talked to him, he told me he had been in trouble all his life, both inside and outside the institutions, and that he had revolted all his life, even inside the institutions, until he came to this farm. He put his hand on a cow and he said that these animals made him recognize what life is all about. He was rehabilitated as an individual. He said himself that he actually became a human being because he was working with livestock. He understood and loved those animals.

My colleague mentioned earlier how they cared so much about an animal with foot rot that really, from my perspective as a farmer, should have been put down. But they cared and they wanted to bring that animal back to life. They wanted to give her life again, where she could walk and be productive again. When I went back to that prison farm eight months later, that cow had healed. That is rehabilitation and working with animals, and I make those points to point out how important working with livestock and working on prison farms really is for the rehabilitation of individuals.

I want to come back to the facility itself. A case study of the Frontenac facility indicates that the program has been successful. The program that the government wants to close down was successful, and I have to ask why it wants to close them down. Why does it want to misrepresent the facts relative to these institutions? Why do the Conservatives not want to rehabilitate inmates so that they can get on to producing in the economy again in a productive way?

The Frontenac facility has been in operation since 1962 and it operates on 455 hectares of class two farmland. The facility houses 130 cattle and produces 4,000 litres of milk per day, which places this facility within the top 20% in terms of productivity in the province of Ontario.

In 2005, this prison farm operation won Frontenac County's most improved dairy herd award, and when we walk in the facility we see the breeding, the genetics that are in that herd. That herd has been around since the turn of the last century. There are genetics in that herd that just cannot be replaced by going out and buying another herd. The facility supplies milk and eggs to Corrections Canada institutions in Ontario and Quebec.

Routine Proceedings

The training program provides, through the prison farm, as follows. Inmates receive training on heavy equipment maintenance related to farm machinery. Inmates receive training on operating tractors, loaders, corn planters, harvesters, ploughs and spreaders. Inmates working in dairy operations can receive third-party certification for learning to operate and maintain the industrial pouch filler. They learn welding skills in the repair of farm equipment. They learn how to operate a variety of hand and power tools. They learn about environmental stewardship, which includes nutrient management and composting. They are trained in crop management and how to maximize yield and feed values. They receive training on feed management as it relates to milk and egg production. They learn how to grade eggs to meet industry standards. They learn how to operate a major poultry operation. They learn about animal care and welfare, including proper management and breeding techniques.

They learn a lot in these institutions, including management skills for the herd, administrative capacities in running computers and clerical skills. All those are important and, with the loss, with the closing down of the prison farm system, the ability to learn those skills in a farm setting where they get rehabilitation as well is lost because of this ridiculous decision by the Government of Canada. It is a decision not based on facts but based on an attitude toward people who have gone to prison, yes, to pay a price for a crime. However, the prison farm system actually rehabilitates them in a way that makes them better persons in society when they get out. That is what we need. The government should be ashamed.

• (1550)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, the then minister of public safety and national security was quoted, at the time when the announcement was made of the closings, that none of the prisoners ever worked in farming and, for that reason alone, the prisons were useless. He did not seem to understand, and this is what I want my friend to comment on. He had no appreciation whatsoever of the rehabilitative aspect of working in that setting and all of the other talents.

I know my friend just ran out of time, so I would like him to comment on the lack of understanding, lack of knowledge really, on the part of the minister of the day.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, the minister's understanding of the issue relative to rehabilitation when he was the minister in charge of public safety, in charge of the RCMP, in charge of CSIS, in charge of prisons in this country, is almost beyond belief.

The problem though, and the reason the minister does not understand, is that he never walked in the doors of one of those prison farms. We need to walk in the prison farm, go in and see these inmates working with the livestock, whether it is the cattle in a dairy operation, the beef in a beef operation or the poultry. We need to see them working in the machinery shop.

What the minister should have seen is the pride of these inmates when they worked in the dairy operation and provided food for other institutions across the country, but that is one of the failures of the minister and the government. They do not want to know the facts. They will not go and look at the facts, because they want to believe what they want to believe even if it is wrong, and in this case, they are very much wrong.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member brought some great evidence to this House, certainly anecdotal evidence, which we did not get from the other side in any way, shape or form, but I do want to ask him about some of the statistical evidence, if available, that provides credence to the argument that these programs should continue.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, one of the difficulties on the statistical side is that the government did not provide us with the documentation we asked for. It claims that the prison farms are losing \$4 million. I do not believe that for a minute.

Where is the food for these institutions going to come from in the future? Is it going to be American food? Is it going to come from Chile? Is it going to come from Argentina? It is not necessarily going to be Canadian, under our system, but let me point this out.

The government is adopting the American system, but the United States now is recognizing how valuable prison farms are and it is reinstating some of them. In California, it is a crop operation.

Here is a headline from the Associated Press: "South Carolina's largest dairy will be at prison". The article goes on to explain it. It says, "Others take away a work ethic". In a quote from this, a Mr. Dew says, "They are learning that for everything you do, it takes effort. You get up, you go to work, you do your job and you go home."

The Americans, which the government likes to follow, it seems, are now recognizing that prison farms are of value, and the government is throwing away an opportunity for feeding our own prison system from within and rehabilitating inmates in a way that they are more productive in society. That is a shame.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Madam Speaker, at outset, I find this debate extremely disappointing.

We have heard today, and in days previous, that the most important priority for Canadians, and certainly the most important priority for this government, is jobs and the economy. Rather than debating the budget, rather than moving forward with the priority not only of this government but all Canadians, the opposition today decides to waste three hours of House time debating prison farms.

The opposition, and particularly the opposition Liberals, has continuously stated in the House that they are concerned with the priorities of Canadians. Only the Liberals, it seems, can speak out of both sides of their mouths, while trying to wrap themselves in a cloak of sanctimony. They have no intention of dealing with the priorities of Canadians.

I have no option then in trying to refocus this Parliament on the true priorities, which is jobs, the economy and our budget. Therefore, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

• (1555)

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

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Call in the members.

• (1635)

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

(Division No. 133)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Arthur	Baird
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Hawn
Hiebert	Hoback
Hoeppner	Holder
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Paradis
Payne	Petit

Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Saxton	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Thompson	Tilson
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Verner
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young — 132

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Beaudin	Bélanger
Bennett	Bevington
Bigras	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brisson
Brunelle	Cannis
Cardin	Carrier
Charlton	Chow
Coady	Coderre
Comartin	Cotler
Crombie	Crowder
Cullen	D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Donnelly	Dorion
Dosanji	Dryden
Duceppe	Dufour
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter	Eyking
Faille	Folco
Foote	Freeman
Garneau	Gaudet
Goodale	Gravelle
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Holland
Hughes	Hyer
Ignatieff	Jennings
Julian	Kania
Karygiannis	Kennedy
Laforest	Laframboise
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
Malhi	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Ménard
Mendes	Minna
Mourani	Mulcair
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Nadeau	Neville
Oliphant	Ouellet
Pacetti	Paillet (Hochelaga)
Paquette	Patry
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Proulx	Rae
Rafferty	Ratans
Regan	Rodriguez

Rota
Savage
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Scarpaleggia
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Thibeault
Trudeau
Vincent
Wrzesnewskyj

PAIRED

Nil

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

* * *

● (1640)

WESTERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure to table a document, which is the government's answer to Question No. 443 on the order paper.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House and engage in this important debate. A majority of parliamentarians have just sent a message to the government that a debate around prison farms needs to take place in the House. We represent Canadians who view the continuation of prison farms as key to the work we do in corrections, to the work we do in terms of rehabilitation, and to the work we do as a country in our treatment of people in our correctional system and how we move forward as communities and as Canadians.

I represent an area where people often fall through the cracks and end up in a cycle of violence. They sometimes end up in the correctional system in a much more disproportionate way. The way that we work with these people to rehabilitate them and bring them back to our communities is critical, especially to my part of the country, which is northern Manitoba.

I am part of a generation that has seen the U.S. crime and punishment policies fail. The U.S. has invested billions of dollars in a correctional system that has not been found to be successful when it comes to reducing crime rates and rehabilitating people.

Many of us find it extremely problematic that our Canadian government is carrying on with such ineffective policies when it comes to corrections and public safety. These policies are completely ineffective and are not based on factual information, which is disturbing.

I have had the honour of speaking out, along with many of my NDP colleagues, on the importance of prison farms in our correctional system. Whether it was at committee, at hearings across the country or at community meetings, the message from Canadians was clear. They understand in a big way that prison farms are a key part of our correctional system.

Routine Proceedings

Beyond the specific skills that are taught to inmates at prison farms, numerous other benefits also accrue. I would like to list a number of ways in which the prison farm system is valuable to our correctional system.

Inmates receive vocational training while working on a farming operation, whether it is meat-cutting or equipment maintenance or other direct skills. They are taught a strong work ethic. They wake up early and work long and hard hours. These are skills that they will take back into their communities after they leave the farms.

Working with animals has well established therapeutic value, helping to teach inmates empathy and providing a mutual avenue for caring and affection, something that was perhaps missed in their upbringing, as is often the case.

Inmates learn to work as part of a team and towards common goals, providing direction and motivation that is usually lacking in a prison environment.

Prison farms provide wholesome, locally grown food to correctional institutions and surrounding communities at discount prices. This provides an important link with local communities outside the correctional system.

Prison farms have donated thousands of dollars worth of food to local food banks, which nobody can dispute as not being beneficial.

Prison farms are an avenue for community involvement in our prison system. One successful example is the Wallace abattoir partnership in Kingston.

● (1645)

The prison farm system offers many benefits. To discount those benefits, and certainly to hear the government disregard those benefits and put them aside, truly speaks to the lack of key information that holds this kind of system, this system towards rehabilitation, in place.

Echoing some of the discussions that have taken place in this House already on this important issue is the fact that what we are seeing here, the attack on prison farms, the attack on a rehabilitation policy that has been effective, is truly an ideological attack on the way we ought to be dealing with inmates, with people who have done wrong, but certainly, in many cases, people who want to go through a system and build better lives for themselves, for their families and for their communities.

It is disappointing to let people down who are willing to take that step. In many cases, as we know, prison farms are the best kind of work for inmates and it is not until their record within a correctional institution is a positive one that they get that chance to work on a prison farm.

Many have noted that a prison farm system is one that motivates inmates to do better, to improve while they are in prison. Certainly it builds a system where they hope to get into prison farm work. To lose that kind of motivation, that reason they ought to perhaps do better, is truly damaging in terms of creating incentives, of creating safer places within our correctional system, and of course, it is letting down prisoners who are committed to furthering their skill set but certainly to improving as human beings as well.

Routine Proceedings

A friend of mine works in a correctional system and did work at Stony Mountain prison in my home province of Manitoba, and she spoke of the challenge that rehabilitation systems across the board have faced in terms of lack of funding. She noted that, for many people, while they signed up for a life skills program or a program that would help them, the lack of funding meant that the waiting lists were so huge that people actually finished their terms before they could access this kind of programming.

To me, that is absolutely unacceptable. Here are inmates who recognize that they need to engage in improving, that they need to prepare themselves to get out into society, and the system lets them down. By starving these programs of proper funding, the government is letting them down. We are truly setting them up to fail, to go back into communities without the skills that would help them. Therefore, we see the re-creation of this revolving door that certainly the Conservative Party likes to speak of, but with these kinds of steps, it is certainly encouraging that revolving-door policy in the justice system.

I would like to point out as well my particular exposure to the Rockwood facility in Manitoba. I had the opportunity to speak with people who were associated with this institution and I saw first-hand the good work that took place there. I was also speaking with my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona, who had the opportunity to visit this facility and he shared how powerful it was and how clear it was that such facilities are absolutely essential.

A friend of mine in Northern Manitoba, elder Dave Sanderson, who works in the justice field, spoke of the aboriginal healing programs that took place at Rockwood. We know that our correctional facilities have a disproportionate number of aboriginal, first nations and Métis peoples in them. To get rid of the facilities that allowed for aboriginal-specific programming to take place on their territory, on their grounds, is unbelievable, knowing who is in the system and what kind of help they need. Once again the government is shutting down the capacity for aboriginal people to rehabilitate, to get back into society and get back into contributing to their families and to their communities in a productive way.

• (1650)

There is much debate as to exactly why these prison farms are being shut down. I had the opportunity to visit rural Manitoba and talk about the importance of prison farms. The area that I was in was heavily agricultural. It was shocking to many people that the initial statement that was made about why the Conservative government wanted to shut these prison farms down was because agricultural skills are somehow not needed in Canadian society anymore.

I cannot think of anything more offensive to one of the founding industries of our country than that statement. In Manitoba, across the Prairies and across Canada, we know the agricultural industry is key to our economy and the employment it generates is key to our communities and our regional economies.

We also know there has been an increased demand for temporary foreign workers. Here we have an opportunity to train people who could go back and work on these farms, who could contribute to this economy, and we are throwing that opportunity out the window. At the same time, we are certainly bringing offence to the hard work that people in the agricultural industry in our country engage in day

in and day out. That is simply not right, especially coming from a party that claims to stand up for people working in agriculture, for farmers and agricultural communities.

Another critical dimension to this debate is how we are approaching the important discussion around food security. We have heard from many witnesses at committee and across the country about the contribution of prison farms to the food security in the prisons themselves, by way of producing food and the livestock necessary for feeding the inmates, but also the contribution to the surrounding communities, either through the food banks or through the different linkages they have created.

I know in Manitoba work was being done in terms of fertilizer contribution to neighbouring communities, and certainly the agricultural work that happens in the Interlake area. To lose those kinds of linkages is not just damaging in the context of the prisons and the surrounding communities but also speaks to the failure of the government to truly devise a real framework when it comes to establishing food security across the board.

We have seen the government's attack on the Canadian Wheat Board. We have seen the government's attack when it comes to establishing food security in northern areas and the imposed changes on the food mail program. We have seen the government turn a blind eye to the demands made by agriculturalists and producers across the country with respect to the challenges they are facing.

We as Canadians need a government that steps in and says that we have such wealth in terms of resources across our country that we should be looking at making sure that Canadians have food security that they can depend on, that the linkages are serving our communities, that we are supporting local farmers and farming families and are not breaking down these linkages that support these communities and this economy in the name of, well, we are not quite sure what it is in the name of, because the government's decision on prison farms, similar to other agricultural policies, has lacked some factual foundation. And I would use the Canadian Wheat Board example once again.

There is that need for the government to stand up for our communities and for these community linkages, as my area knows quite well.

Increasingly, we do not have a government that stands up for Canadians, no matter what they are going through, to say that what we are facing is not right. I use the most recent example of the need for the federal government to step up and work to protect jobs in the community that I am in, in Thompson, when it comes to mining, for example, the same as we see when it comes to agriculture across western Canada.

Routine Proceedings

●(1655)

When it comes to prison farms, we see the approach to agriculture, at the smaller scale, to be very much in the same vein. The government is pulling back and saying that somehow it does not have a role to play to support these kinds of skills and truly to support Canadians who are on the margins of society. In this case, we are speaking of inmates who, in many cases, made wrong decisions, who want to make a change, who want to come back to contribute to our communities and to our country. As New Democrats, we believe the government has a role to play. It should stand up for these Canadians. It should stand up for implementing effective crime and public safety policy and for protecting prison farms—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member.

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, Aboriginal Affairs.

If the hon. member wishes to conclude before questions and comments, she has three and a half minutes left.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to conclude.

As a final point, I would like to look at the government's wrong-headed approach to crime and justice. On one hand, we have the eradication of the prison farms that contribute in a great way to employment skills, to the local food economy, to rehabilitation, the value of which we cannot quantify. On the other hand, by getting rid of that, we are taking away contributions in values of money that we cannot even begin to assess. We compare that to the commitments that the government is making in building new prisons and the kind of money that going to bricks and mortar to house more people in prisons, which clearly will not have the needed rehabilitation programming.

We have heard figures of \$9 billion to \$10 billions to be spent on building new prisons. That money could be spent on extending programming that would serve to rehabilitate people and build healthier communities. Instead, billions of dollars are being applied toward crimes that we cannot imagine or cannot calculate.

A statement was made in recent months that without responding to figures of criminality, when we know crime has gone down, really speaks to the lack of information or fact that is behind the government's policy when it comes to the correctional system and everything that goes with it. It speaks to the failure of putting real priorities on the table, looking at prioritizing prevention, for example.

As I mentioned, I come from northern Manitoba and I have the honour to represent those communities. In those communities young people grow up with no recreation facilities. First nations have substandard schools infested by mould. Young people face levels of poverty that are shocking to most Canadians.

Last night I watched a film, hosted by the Assembly of First Nations, called *Third World Canada*. I and so many others live in

that kind of Canada. Instead of recognizing the root causes of crime, whether it is poverty or lack of access to opportunity, and instead of saying we need to build healthier communities, the government is pulling away from its responsibility to first nations. It is pulling away from government programs that support people on the margins of our society. It is getting rid of valuable rehabilitation programming for people who end up in the correctional system. Not only that, it is spending a gross amount of money on building prisons that will serve nothing more than to make our society less secure and less healthy.

On that note, I—

●(1700)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Beauséjour.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Churchill gave what I thought was a very compelling intervention in this important discussion. I certainly share a lot of her concerns about the wrong direction the Conservative government is proposing on the corrections and justice policy areas.

My colleague from Manitoba knows her province has one of the prison farms that is slated for closure. Could she return to something she said about the lack of the Conservative government's attention toward rehabilitation programming, which I thought was very interesting? It seems to want to focus on punishing offenders once somebody has already been victimized. Yet in communities like Churchill, Manitoba or in New Brunswick, which I represent, there are cuts and reductions to community-based programs.

Could the member for Churchill elaborate on some of the closures or reductions in prevention and community programs designed to help youth at risk and give communities and local institutions the tools they need to prevent crime, not simply focus on punishing offenders once a crime has already been committed?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, that important question outlines the failure of the government to look at preventing people from reaching these institutions. It claims to have real problems with criminality and sees the value of punishment, but why do we not save ourselves the money and hassle of sending more people to prison and deal with supporting community programs?

I invite members of the government to my region, some of which have already visited, to hear from people in communities like Shamattawa, where young people could not use the arena when it was first built. Because it received so little money from the federal government and it was built below standard, it filled up with mould right away. When the community made an application for money under Canada's economic action plan, it was turned away. Only the provincial NDP said that it viewed preventive recreation programming in communities as a way of having healthy communities.

People who come from some of those communities end up in the correctional system. Let us support people before they get there.

Routine Proceedings

•(1705)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of Correctional Service Canada's principal concerns is the need to rehabilitate criminal offenders back into society with marketable skills. It has been found that almost none of the convicts spending time on prison farms are finding employment in the agriculture sector.

In order for prison farms to remain open to provide marketable skills to convicts who have paid their debt to society, employment opportunities must be available. On that basis, I wrote to many farmers in my riding last summer when the prison farm closure was pending. I asked if there was any way they would consider offering employment on their farms to someone who had paid his or debt to society. The president of the local National Farmers Union said it was a crazy idea.

Does the member opposite know anyone in her riding who would offer employment to an ex-convict who had honed his or her skills on a prison farm?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, first, I welcome the member to hear directly from people in my riding. We recognize that people who have gone through the system are people who have come from our communities. They have families and they are part of a broader network of which we are all part. Not only do they have the right to work, some people believe that rehabilitation extends after they leave the correctional system and that we all have a role to play. I believe that is a fundamental value we have as Canadians.

On a discussion around marketable skills, it has come up numerous times. I listed off the value of the work that inmates were doing in prison farms, and they extend far beyond specific agricultural-related skills. We have mentioned these many times. Clearly, they are being disregarded by the government. Instead, we have heard there will be other options available to them. There has been no real plan presented with other options. Coming from a part of the country where there have been shifts in industry and the need to look at skills development, IT or trades, these things come up quite often.

However, inmates are looking for, as should all Canadians, a real plan that serves to support them so they can come back to our communities, whatever they are doing, and become productive members, something that will not happen as a result of getting rid of prison farms.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Churchill and the member for Malpeque gave excellent speeches on this motion. Taxpayers are already on the hook for costs as a result of the closing of these six prison farms. Evidently the cost of replacing the milk that the prison farms produce in Ontario alone to 11 facilities is pegged at around \$990,000. I assume that would be on an annual basis.

Prison farms also have a very valuable role to play in the Kingston area because there is a slaughterhouse and it is the only one between Montreal and Toronto. Many farmers in that area are concerned that they will lose the slaughterhouse facility. There are many ramifications that the government has not considered in taking on this measure, totally a wrong-headed measure and a measure that hopefully we can reverse once we get rid of the government.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, the discussion around costs has been recurring in the discussions around prison farms. It has been a challenge to have the real costs discussed. However, one thing many people have noted is the value of effective rehabilitation of prisoners and how we ought to consider that.

On the note of costs increasing already, many of us question who will pick up the slack when it comes to providing food and the resources to prisons. I certainly have those questions. Who is going to be benefiting from these contracts? We already know that providing food to the prison system is a pretty good business and a pretty sure business as well. Supporting that business model instead of supporting Canadians who want to make their lives better is a pretty shameful approach.

•(1710)

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Westmorland Institution in Dorchester, New Brunswick was closed down. This is a quote from the Moncton *Times & Transcript*, and I would like to have the member's comment on it. It said that this decision was:

—a lightning rod for addressing the Conservative Party's generally short-sighted policies on farming, food and justice. The decision to shut down this successful rehabilitation program symbolizes our government's lack of understanding of what actually makes the public safe, and their failure to recognize the value of a restorative approach to justice...

Does the member agree with that?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, that statement is applicable entirely, not only to this, but to so many of the proposals put forward by the Conservative government when it comes to crime and justice. We are asking to hear from people on the ground and from people in the system. We want to hear not only from inmates, but also from people who, at great risk to their safety, work in the correctional system. We want to hear from the communities around them, the agricultural community, the labour community. We want to hear from people who have said that prison farms and the work they do are integral to the way we move forward as a society, as Canadians. Let us listen to them and make decisions based on what they say. After all, that is who we are here to represent.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to stand today and perhaps answer some of the questions that have already been put forth. However, we are here as a result of a motion put forward by the parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. That motion calls for the Minister of Public Safety to halt any steps to close the farming operations in Canada's federal prisons in order to allow a panel of independent experts to be assembled to study the farm program.

Routine Proceedings

To give members some background on how the decision to close the farm program came about, I will first remind them of the government's strategic review exercise that was undertaken in 2008. As members know, government programs are reviewed on a four-year cycle with a view to determining whether they are the right kind of program and whether they are being delivered effectively. The Correctional Service of Canada participated in the 2008 strategic review, which was an excellent opportunity for the service to bring its programs, and indeed its priorities, in line with the government's direction for a federal correctional system.

The government's first priority to Canadians is their safety. To that end, the government provides resources and programs that assist in the rehabilitation of federal offenders to facilitate their transition into law-abiding citizens once released into the community. We are committed to ensuring that the resources for rehabilitation programs are in place and are allocated in a manner that provides the best possible results for offenders and for public safety.

The government offers a wide range of correctional programs to federal offenders. With new ideas and changing offender demographics, we must be adaptive so as to provide the most effective rehabilitation programs, including those that enable the offenders to learn employability skills that enable them to obtain and retain employment upon their release into communities. We know that offenders who have been provided with employment experience and skills are less likely to re-offend and are reintegrated into society far more effectively.

We also know that our success relies on ensuring that the skills the offenders are learning are reflective of the skills that are in demand in labour markets, not only today, but in the future. Canada's prison farms have a long history of imparting skills that have enabled some offenders to find employment in the agricultural sector. However, the government believes that it must move forward and provide programming that meets the needs of the 21st century.

In the last five years, less than 1% of federal offenders released into the community have successfully attained employment in the agricultural sector. I believe we can do better and that we have done better. Through CORCAN, a special operating agency of the federal government, offenders are provided with essential employment experience. CORCAN provides employability skills that can be applied to any number of jobs, and offenders learn job-specific skills.

Offenders work in jobs in CORCAN's manufacturing services and construction and textile industries. As well, they are employed in our correctional facilities and other work programs, such as maintenance and kitchens. In all, in 2008-2009, CORCAN and the Correctional Services of Canada provided 27,715 work assignments for 15,123 federal offenders. This is in comparison to the approximately 300 offenders involved in the prison farm program.

As I have stated, in order for the acquiring of employment skills to have the desired effect of securing offender employment upon release, our programs must be representative of the labour market outside the walls of our institutions. Canada's agricultural sector simply does not supply enough employment opportunities for offenders to aid in their successful reintegration into society. The government wholeheartedly supports our farmers and our farming

industry, but with respect to the utility of the prison farm program to offender employment, the jobs are simply elsewhere.

An economy must evolve with the changing times, as must the economy's industries. Employment for all Canadians is affected by this evolution, and this should be reflected in the employment programs we offer throughout the rehabilitation process of federal offenders.

The Correctional Service of Canada has formed, and continues to form, partnerships with businesses and other government departments with a view to developing alternative employment programs in order to gain maximum employability skills for offenders.

• (1715)

Of equal importance to the rehabilitative aspect of this topic are the issues associated with the commercial aspect of the prison farm program. Indeed, this is not only a rehabilitative program for offenders, but the prison farm produces consumable goods. Of CSC's total food budget of \$27 million, food valued at \$4 million was purchased from CORCAN prison farms by the correctional service for consumption by inmates in 2008-09. This amount accounts for approximately 15% of the food procured during that time. Moreover, beef, pork and chicken purchased from CORCAN were generally more expensive than products that could be purchased from private commercial vendors.

I do not believe it would be difficult for private business to step in and fill this small 15% vacuum left with the closure of the prison farms, through the normal tendering practices. In fact, CSC is expecting to provide food to offenders at a lower price to taxpayers through economies of scale. This will bring CSC in line with the government's national strategy to use a procurement process that is more consistent for all government departments, thus providing better use of Canadian taxpayers' money.

Finally, I would like to bring to members' attention that, in dealing with the provision of agricultural products, there are some issues of liability that should be considered. The health of livestock, the potential contaminants to producers and land and environmental concerns, which go hand in hand with the agriculture industry, should not be a potential concern for CORCAN and Correctional Services Canada. Unlike private industry, with profit as a motive and such liabilities considered as a cost of doing business, it would not be desirable to subject government to such liability. The primary concern of CORCAN and Correctional Service Canada with employment programs should be their effectiveness in rehabilitation.

Routine Proceedings

We have heard the success stories of prison farms; we have heard the criticism of the decision to close the prison farms. Change is not normally seamless; there will always be bumps on the road. The decision to close the prison farms is a necessary one and one that reflects the reality of the times. The government believes in the rehabilitative benefit of work experience provided by CORCAN, but prison farms do not give enough value for the money.

I would like to continue with some important arguments that do need to be heard.

Members have heard the rationale for the closure of the prison farms and have been informed of the successful employment programs under way for offenders in our federal correctional system. I would like to enlighten them today on the impetus that was behind many of these changes.

In 2007, the government mandated an independent review panel to recommend changes to our federal correctional system. This panel carefully scrutinized the service's operational priorities, strategies and future business plans. In October 2008, the review panel put forward 109 recommendations, the implementation of which will be significantly important in guiding Correctional Service Canada towards fulfilling its mandate of public safety.

In order to adhere to and build upon these recommendations, in budget 2008, this government committed \$122 million over the course of two years, effectively endorsing the assessment process. This process takes place at the commencement of an offender's federal sentence.

We have heard many people say that we do not care about rehabilitation. I would like to suggest that there has been a lot of work put into thinking about what is appropriate rehabilitation. This is not about not providing the appropriate services. When I look at the opposition members, I wonder sometimes why they are just so reluctant to look at change. We put a program in place and it seems as if the opposition can never stand to see anything change. It is important to change, and we have to be willing to change with the times.

Enhancements included earlier placements in correctional programs that are aimed at addressing the factors that caused the individual to offend and quicker diagnosis of mental health needs. We certainly know that mental health needs are a huge issue in our prison system and we need much more effective ways to deal with them.

At the opposite end of the offender's sentence, upon release into the community, the service has strengthened its community corrections capacity, formed relations with new community partners and established new criteria for operating correctional community centres and parole offices.

● (1720)

Phase two, which unfolded in March 2009, focused on the creation and implementation of more detailed and sensitive forms of programming. This comes at a time when Correctional Services Canada was dealing with a more diverse and complex federal offender population.

We have heard many times public dismay at the overrepresentation of aboriginals in our federal correctional system. In an effort to improve the opportunities of aboriginal offenders to become law-abiding citizens, Correctional Services has done many things.

I would like to continue by sharing with the House that we have expanded the availability of culturally sensitive programs for these offenders and have continued to form relationships with aboriginal communities to provide support to aboriginal offenders.

To facilitate these initiatives, changes have also come in the form of a more diverse and representative workforce who receive culturally sensitive training, therefore placing them in a better position to interact with aboriginal offenders in an institution and in the community.

As phase two has been successfully completed, these and many other initiatives have been fully incorporated into CSC's regular operations across the country and are being applied each and every day.

While the agenda as a whole remains relatively young, there is no denying the efficacy of the CSC's transformation agenda and the sincere dedication of the service's staff to enact the kinds of policies that afford offenders the opportunity to turn their lives around and successfully reintegrate into society as law-abiding citizens.

I would like to continue by sharing with the House some of these initiatives that CSC has implemented.

By enhancing offender accountability, the onus of offender rehabilitation is shifting and being squarely placed on the shoulders of the offender. Now more than ever, federal offenders are being held accountable for developing, embracing and following through with the correctional plan developed for them by the members of their case management team. If the offender fails to embrace this accountability and participate fully in the rehabilitation plans, it will be clear proof upon reaching eligibility for some form of conditional release that the offender is not deserving of an opportunity to return to the community and is certainly not intending to do so as a law-abiding citizen.

This government wants offenders to understand that being given an opportunity to reintegrate into the community is a reward for good behaviour, for completing the necessary programming and for showing victims, correctional staff and Canadians a sincere desire to change. It should be seen as a privilege, not a right.

The Correctional Service of Canada has also made great strides toward eliminating drugs in its federal correctional institutions, by implementing an enhanced anti-drug strategy with an intensified focus on prevention, intervention, treatment and enforcement. Correctional organizations around the world recognize the difficulty of achieving drug-free institutions, but regardless of the challenges, the service remains committed to working toward eliminating drugs from its institutions.

To do so, the service has put in place a number of improvements. There has been an increase in the number of drug-detector dog teams, an increase to its security intelligence capacity, improved security equipment such as x-ray and ION scanners, and enhanced perimeter security.

As illicit drugs are too often a contributing factor to criminal behaviour as well as a prime means of spreading infectious diseases through shared needles, it is vital for the service to do everything in its power to combat contraband items by reducing the supply and increasing the awareness of the consequences of drug use. Once again, there are clear signs that this initiative will further enhance our efforts and results.

To conclude, I would simply like to reiterate the fact that sound government policy, like that under which the Correctional Service of Canada operates, enhances public safety and at the same time provides federal offenders with opportunities to improve their potential to become law-abiding and contributing members of Canadian society.

• (1725)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am trying to draw some of the connections here. The member talked about the fact that the government wants to put the emphasis now on responsibility for the particular person incarcerated, in jail, for the sake of rehabilitation.

On the other hand, it has written off this program in several ways, one of which was it was not gaining employment in the agricultural sector. Therefore I do not see how the two relate.

I am honestly asking this question. Did the government consult with the officials on the ground and even the rehabilitated prisoners themselves as to where they would like to be involved in getting that responsibility and why this program was so bad?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I hear that the member is puzzled, but I wonder if he actually has been listening.

We have a changing world. Sometimes with a changing world, we have to change with the times. We have to provide opportunities within the prison system for skills, whether they be mechanical, woodworking or carpentry skills.

There are many opportunities for employment when people get out. I think I heard some comments earlier. Truly, the opportunities are not within the agricultural system.

People should not be afraid to change. We need to move forward, and this is a great plan for moving forward.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo made very intelligent comments about the prison farm system and why we are changing it.

As the member knows, there is little uptake of the skills the prisoners learn by working on farms because farmers are not hiring them. They need skills that are actually going to be useful in a general workplace, so that they can find employment once they get out and reintegrate into society.

I had an opportunity to visit our local prison in Abbotsford. I saw prisoners picking up new skills and new trades, such as heavy duty mechanics. Those are the kinds of skills they need.

The Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, I do not think there is enough time for a response. Perhaps the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo could discuss it with the member for Abbotsford while the bells are ringing.

Private Members' Business

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

PROTECTION OF INSIGNIA OF MILITARY ORDERS, DECORATIONS AND MEDALS ACT

The House resumed from November 26 consideration of Bill C-473, An Act to protect insignia of military orders, decorations and medals of cultural significance for future generations, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage of Bill C-473 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

• (1810)

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

(Division No. 134)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Anders
Angus	Armstrong
Arthur	Ashton
Atamanenko	Benoit
Bernier	Bevington
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Cadman	Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Carrie
Casson	Charlton
Chong	Chow
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Comartin
Crowder	Cullen
Cummins	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dewar
Donnelly	Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dykstra	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Gravelle	Grewal
Guergis	Harris (St. John's East)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Hughes	Hyer
Julian	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Layton
Lebel	Lemieux
Leslie	Lobb
Lukivski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse

Private Members' Business

Mathysen	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mulcair
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Pacetti	Paradis
Payne	Petit
Poilievre	Preston
Rafferty	Raitt
Rajotte	Reid
Richardson	Rickford
Savoie	Saxton
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Siksay	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Stoffer	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Thibeault	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Yelich	Young — 160

NAYS

Members

Ambrose	André
Andrews	Asselin
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Beaudin	Bennett
Bigras	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brisson
Brunelle	Byrne
Calkins	Cannis
Cannon (Pontiac)	Cardin
Carrier	Coady
Coderre	Cotler
Crombie	D'Amours
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dorion
Dosanjh	Dryden
Duceppe	Dufour
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Easter
Eyking	Faillie
Folco	Foote
Freeman	Garneau
Gaudet	Goodale
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Holland	Jennings
Kania	Karygiannis
Laforest	Laframboise
Lavallée	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Malhi	Malo
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McTeague
Ménard	Mendes
Minna	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Nadeau	Neville
O'Connor	Oliphant
Ouellet	Paillet (Hochelaga)
Paquette	Patry
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Proulx	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Richards	Rodriguez
Rota	Russell
Savage	Scarpaleggia
Sgro	Silva

Simms	Simson
St-Cyr	Szabo
Tonks	Trost
Trudeau	Valeriot
Van Loan	Vincent
Wilfert	Woodworth
Wrzesnewskyj	Zarac — 110

PAIRED

Members

Ashfield	Bellavance
Gagnon	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Kent	Ritz — 6

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

FEDERAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACT

The House resumed from November 29 consideration of the motion that Bill S-210, An Act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act and the Auditor General Act (involvement of Parliament), be read the third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill S-210 under private members' business.

● (1820)

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

(Division No. 135)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	André
Andrews	Armstrong
Arthur	Asselin
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Beaudin	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Bigras
Blackburn	Blais
Blaney	Block
Bonsant	Bouchard
Boucher	Boughen
Bourgeois	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Brunelle	Byrne
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannis	Cannon (Pontiac)
Cardin	Carrie
Carrier	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Coderre	Cotler
Crombie	Cummins
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	DeBellefeuille
Dechert	Del Mastro
Demers	Devoilin
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dorion
Dosanjh	Dreeschen
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)

Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Faille	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Folco
Footé	Freeman
Galipeau	Gallant
Garneau	Gaudet
Généreux	Glover
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guergis
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Holland	Jean
Jennings	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kania	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Laforest
Laframboise	Lake
Lauzon	Lavallée
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lemieux	Lessard
Lévesque	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	Mackay (Central Nova)
Mackenzie	Malhi
Malo	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Ménard	Mendes
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Pailé (Hochelaga)	Paquette
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Petit
Plamondon	Poilievre
Pomerleau	Preston
Proulx	Raït
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Sgro
Shea	Shiple
Shory	Silva
Simms	Simson
Smith	Sorenson
St-Cyr	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Valerioté	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Vincent
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilfert	Wong
Woodworth	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich	Young
Zarac — 239	

Routine Proceedings

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Bevington	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar	Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Gravelle
Harris (St. John's East)	Hughes
Hyer	Julian
Layton	Leslie
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Mulcair	Rafferty
Savoie	Siksay
Stoffer	Thibeault — 34

PAIRED

Members

Ashfield	Bellavance
Gagnon	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Kent	Ritz — 6

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The House resumed from November 30 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology concerning the extension of time to consider Bill C-501.

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it I believe you will find agreement to apply the vote on the previous motion to the current motion with Conservatives voting yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, members of the Liberal Party of Canada are voting yes.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois are voting yes.

[English]

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, NDP members are voting yes.

Hon. Helena Guergis: Mr. Speaker, I am in favour of this motion.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Mr. André Arthur: Mr. Speaker, I am in favour of this motion.

[English]

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

(Division No. 136)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
André	Andrews
Angus	Armstrong
Arthur	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Beaudin	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevington	Bezan
Bigras	Blackburn
Blais	Blaney
Block	Bonsant
Bouchard	Boucher
Boughen	Bourgeois
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Brunoogoe	Brunelle
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Cannon (Pontiac)	Cardin
Carrie	Carrier
Casson	Charlton
Chong	Chow
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Coderre	Comartin
Cotler	Crombie
Crowder	Cullen
Cummins	D'Amours
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	DeBellefeuille
Dechert	Del Mastro
Demers	Devolin
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Donnelly	Dorion
Dosanji	Dreeschen
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Faille
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Freeman	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Gaudet	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Gravelle
Grewal	Guergis
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Holland
Hughes	Hyer
Jean	Jennings
Julian	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)

Kania	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	LaForest
Laframboise	Lake
Lauzon	Lavallée
Layton	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Lemieux
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Mayer
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Ménard	Mendes
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Mulcair	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Nadeau	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Ouellet
Pacetti	Paillet (Hochelaga)
Paquette	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Petit	Plamondon
Poilievre	Pomerleau
Preston	Proulx
Rafferty	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Siksay	Silva
Simms	Simson
Smith	Sorenson
St-Cyr	Stanton
Stoffer	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thibault
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Valeriotte	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Vincent
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilfert	Wong
Woodworth	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich	Young
Zarac — 273	

NAYS

PAIRED

Members

Bellavance
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Ritz— 6

Routine Proceedings

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The House resumed from November 30 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology concerning the extension of time to consider Bill C-452.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it I believe you will find unanimous consent to proceed with applying the vote from the previous motion to the current motion with Conservatives voting yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, members of the Liberal Party of Canada are voting yes.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois are voting yes.

[*English*]

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP will also be voting yes.

Hon. Helena Guergis: Mr. Speaker, I support this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Arthur: Mr. Speaker, I am in favour of this motion.

[*English*]

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

(Division No. 137)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
André	Andrews
Angus	Armstrong
Arthur	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Beaudin	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevington	Bezan
Bigras	Blackburn
Blais	Blaney
Block	Bonsant
Bouchard	Boucher
Boughen	Bourgeois
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooog	Brunelle
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Cannon (Pontiac)	Cardin

Carrie	Carrier
Casson	Charlton
Chong	Chow
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Coderre	Comartin
Cotler	Crombie
Crowder	Cullen
Cummins	D'Amours
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	DeBellefeuille
Dechert	Del Mastro
Demers	Devolin
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Donnelly	Dorion
Dosanjh	Dreeschen
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Faille
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Freeman	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Gaudet	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Gravelle
Grewal	Guergis
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Holland
Hughes	Hyer
Jean	Jennings
Julian	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kania	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Laforest
Laframboise	Lake
Lauzon	Lavallée
Layton	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Lemieux
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Mayer
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Ménard	Mendes
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Mulcair	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Nadeau	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Ouellet
Pacetti	Paillé (Hochelaga)
Paquette	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Petit	Plamondon
Poillievre	Pomerleau
Preston	Proulx
Rafferty	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards

Private Members' Business

Richardson	Rickford
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Siksay	Silva
Simms	Simson
Smith	Sorenson
St-Cyr	Stanton
Stoffer	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thibeault
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Valeriotte	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Vincent
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilfert	Wong
Woodworth	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich	Young
Zarac— 273	

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Ashfield	Bellavance
Gagnon	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Kent	Ritz— 6

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being 6:34 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**SEEDS REGULATIONS ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-474, An Act respecting the Seeds Regulations (analysis of potential harm), as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

[*Translation*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There are 10 motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-474.

• (1825)

[*English*]

Motions Nos. 1 to 10 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table. The Chair does not ordinarily provide reasons for selection of report stage motions; however, having been made aware of the circumstances surrounding the committee's study of this bill, I would like to convey to the House the reasons involved in considering these motions.

[*Translation*]

The note accompanying Standing Order 76(5) reads, in part, "The Speaker will normally only select motions that were not or could not be presented in committee."

The Chair takes note that the hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior sits on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, which was mandated to study Bill C-474. Although I believe that the majority of the amendments in his name could have been proposed during the committee consideration of the bill, they were not.

[*English*]

The bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food on April 14, 2010. The committee considered the bill on five different occasions either to hear witnesses or to discuss a work plan. Indeed, the committee was still hearing witnesses when its request for a 30 day extension was denied and the bill was deemed reported back to the House without amendment.

It is to this turn of events that the member for British Columbia Southern Interior referred in a letter to the Chair highlighting that the committee was thus unable to commence clause-by-clause consideration.

The member has therefore submitted at report stage the amendments he had intended to move in committee.

The Chair has carefully reviewed the sequence of events and the submission made by the hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior and in its view it is reasonable to afford him an opportunity to propose these amendments.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, I have selected them for debate at report stage. I shall now propose Motions Nos. 1 to 10 to the House.

[*English*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-474, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing line 6 on page 1 with the following:

"2. The Governor in Council shall, within 90"

Motion No. 2

Bill C-474, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing line 10 on page 1 with the following:

"by the Government of Canada, published in the Canada Gazette and taken into consideration by the Government of Canada before the sale of any new genetically en-"

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-474, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing line 11 on page 1 with the following:

"gineered seed is permitted in Canada."

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-474 be amended by adding after line 11 on page 1 the following new clause:

"3. The results of the analysis referred to in section 2 shall be included as part of every application that is made for the registration of a variety of seed and any notification of the release of the seed in question into the environment."

Private Members' Business

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-474 be amended by adding after line 11 on page 1 the following new clause:

"3. The analysis referred to in section 2 shall take into account the regulatory systems that govern genetically engineered seed and the crops and products that are derived from that seed in the countries that import Canadian agricultural products."

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-474 be amended by adding after line 11 on page 1 the following new clause:

"3. The analysis referred to in section 2 shall take into account the economic impact on Canadian farmers and exporters whose established markets for registered seed or for the crops and products derived from that seed would be harmed as a result of the introduction of the new variety of genetically engineered seed."

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-474 be amended by adding after line 11 on page 1 the following new clause:

"3. The analysis referred to in section 2 shall take into account whether or not the variety of genetically engineered seed in question has been approved for use in the countries that import Canadian agricultural products."

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-474 be amended by adding after line 11 on page 1 the following new clause:

"3. In this Act, "genetically engineered seed" means a seed that has been altered using recombinant DNA (rDNA) technology."

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-474 be amended by adding after line 11 on page 1 the following new clause:

"3. In this Act, "new", in respect of a genetically engineered seed, means a genetically engineered seed that was not registered in Canada before the day on which this Act comes into force."

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-474 be amended by adding after line 11 on page 1 the following new clause:

"3. For the purposes of section 2, "potential harm to export markets" exists if the sale of new genetically engineered seed in Canada would likely result in an economic loss to farmers and exporters as a result of the refusal, by one or more countries that import Canadian agricultural products, to allow the admission of any registered Canadian seed, or crops or products derived from that seed."

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

He said: Mr. Speaker, we are here to participate in debate at third reading of my Bill C-474, An Act respecting the Seeds Regulations (analysis of potential harm). The purpose of this bill is to require that an analysis of potential harm to export markets be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted.

This is not complicated. It makes sense to me to conduct a risk analysis before embarking on something that is potentially risky.

[*English*]

The government clearly believes that the biotech industry should be the only ones with any say over marketing decisions on GM seeds. Perhaps we should consider for a moment how we came to confer this enormous privilege on big biotech.

Devlin Kuyek, from the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, a researcher who has written extensively on the seed system in Canada, recently told the standing committee:

To understand where we are with GMOs in Canada, you have to look at it as a deliberate policy shift that has taken what we call a public seed system with broad-based support from farmers, scientists, and the general public to what we have today, which is essentially a corporate seed system where the research agenda is in the

hands of a very small number of corporations, most of them pesticide corporations outside of Canada.

He notes that billions in taxpayers' dollars have been spent over the last 30 years to support biotech companies, while public plant breeding programs have been slashed and privatized.

[*Translation*]

In September 2009, Canadian farmers and their European customers, who have a zero tolerance policy for unapproved GE crops and products, found that an illegal genetically engineered flax seed called CDC Triffid had contaminated Canadian flax exports. Contamination reached 35 countries.

GE contamination is already hurting Canadian farmers and if a contamination incident similar to the current flax contamination crisis were to happen with wheat or alfalfa, the economic consequences to farmers would be devastating.

[*English*]

What is very disturbing is that we have not had a full and democratic debate at committee, because it was shut down by the Conservative government.

[*Translation*]

The Conservative government reneged on an agreement that would have given the committee more time to examine the advantages of Bill C-474. As a result, farmers no longer have a say and must resort to public protests in order to stop these big biotech companies that are threatening their export markets. It is completely unacceptable that expert witnesses from around the country, brought to Ottawa at taxpayers' expense to provide testimony, were turned away at the committee's door when they arrived to make their presentations.

[*English*]

Let us hear what some of these presenters would have discussed with the committee members if they had been given the chance.

Bill Toews, from the Canadian Wheat Board, says that in order for the commercialization of a GM variety to benefit western Canadian wheat and barley producers, there would first have to be widespread market acceptance. He states, "This includes both what governments will approve and what customers will buy, which is not necessarily the same thing. There remains strong and widespread opposition to GM wheat or barley in about half of our markets. This includes, but isn't limited to, the governments of, and customers in, the European Union, Japan, Thailand, Algeria, Saudi Arabia and a number of African nations. Unfortunately, the markets that are most likely to demand non-GM shipments also have zero tolerance for unapproved GM content".

Mr. Toews goes on to say that segregating GM wheat or barley throughout the bulk handling and transportation system would be impossible. In addition, he points out that there is currently no detection system available to quickly and accurately detect if a GM variety is present in a truck, rail car or vessel and to quantify that presence.

Private Members' Business

Dr. Rene Van Acker, professor at the University of Guelph, has done extensive research on the co-existence of GM and non-GM crops and trait movement from crop to crop. He has been involved in international collaborations, presentations and consulting work with governments and organizations in Denmark, Australia, Switzerland and the U.S.

According to Dr. Van Acker, “when novel traits are grown commercially outside for any length of time the movement of those traits beyond their intended destinations is virtually inevitable. Once a given trait has escaped into the environment, retraction is difficult if not impossible”.

Dr. Van Acker cautions that trait movement is extremely complicated. It occurs within a complex of crop subpopulations, including the crop and volunteer and feral subpopulations. Trait movement can occur via equipment and via human handling during planting, harvesting, seed cleaning, seed handling and seed storage.

He points to the failure of trait containment in the U.S. StarLink case, where GE corn, approved for animal feed but not human consumption, was found in a number of processed foods in 2000.

Recently, GM LibertyLink rice events escaped contained field trials and were eventually found in many elements of the U.S. commercial rice supply chain, including in certified seed, mills and final consumer products in key U.S. rice export markets. The economic impact to U.S. farmers was over \$1 billion.

I would urge my colleagues to visit the online GM contamination registry, which tracks contamination events around the world. The register has documented over 20 unauthorized contamination events in 2010. We must not forget that once the genie is out of the bottle, it is farmers who pay.

Larry and Susan Black, who were also denied their time before the committee, have been farming in southwestern Manitoba since 1978. Their farm is Manitoba's first certified organic dairy farm. According to Mr. Black, “Organic farms have no way to avoid contamination if GM alfalfa is introduced. Alfalfa feeds our soil and our livestock and is an integral part of organic farming. Approving the release of GE alfalfa would threaten our very existence as organic producers. Organic farmers have invested and developed our industry. Government should not allow agri-business to destroy what we have achieved”.

Mr. Black goes on to say that not a single commodity group on the Manitoba Forage Council last year was in favour of the introduction of GM alfalfa.

Stewart Wells, the recently retired president of the National Farmers Union, wrote to the committee about the fact that farmers this year were having trouble selling newly harvested flax because the testing now required to ensure it is GE-free could not be done in a timely fashion, again resulting in further extra costs for Canadian farmers.

He wants to know why it is that because of failures in the regulatory system he should now be forced to pay \$205 per test on flax that he has had in storage for several years.

Two varieties of GE alfalfa have already been approved by Health Canada and Environment Canada, and all Monsanto has to do now is

register them before they can be marketed and turned loose into the environment.

● (1835)

I have to wonder how rigorous Canada's environment evaluation could actually have been, given a U.S. court ruling and a class action suit that came down recently. The judge ruled that plaintiffs' concerns that Monsanto's Roundup Ready alfalfa will contaminate natural and organic alfalfa are valid, stating that the USDA's opposing arguments were “not convincing” and do not demonstrate the “hard look” required by federal environmental laws. The ruling went on to note that “...For those farmers who choose to grow non-genetically engineered alfalfa, the possibility that their crops will be infected with the engineered gene is tantamount to the elimination of all alfalfa; they cannot grow their chosen crop”.

Arnold Taylor, president of the Canadian Organic Growers, writes in the final thoughts of his submission, “I have spent most of the past 10 years fighting in the courts to protect my organic farm and the organic sector from GE crops. Arguably, I should not have had to do this, as my government should have introduced adequate regulations that ensured organic farmers were not adversely affected by the introduction of GE crops”.

He says, “We have lost the ability to grow organic canola because of the introduction of GE varieties. We almost lost our ability to grow organic wheat, because of the potential introduction of GE varieties, and now industry is trying to introduce GE alfalfa”.

He continues, “Arguably, the threat to organic alfalfa is the most significant yet, because it is a soil builder that fixes nitrogen and other essential nutrients, and if it were to be contaminated with GE traits, this might destroy our way of farming entirely. Arguably, GE alfalfa is not needed in agriculture, as it really offers no benefits for conventional or organic farmers—”

● (1840)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I will have to stop the hon. member there as he has run out of time.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am please to rise again to speak to Bill C-474. I want to make it clear to the House of Commons and to Canadians that our Conservative government has been the only party that has been against the bill from when it was first introduced.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-474 is quite simply a bad bill, a bill that works against the best interests of the agricultural sector and we see that today with 10 amendments trying to change the bill, 10 of them all at once.

It seeks to require that an analysis of potential harm to export markets be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted.

The details of how this analysis will actually be conducted are, of course, lacking, even in these 10 amendments.

If Bill C-474 passes into law, it would force Canada to abandon its long-standing position that these types of decisions need to be based on sound science.

It could also potentially devastate research and development within the agricultural sector, whereby R and D firms choose to invest their capital in countries where technology can flourish, not be threatened by a bill such as this one.

From the very beginning we asked ourselves, does the bill put farmers first? Clearly Bill C-474 does not meet this important criterion and this is why we will not support these amendments at the report stage.

Unfortunately, my opposition colleagues across the way have not asked themselves this very same question. The Liberal Party under the direction of its agriculture critic, the member for Malpeque, has supported Bill C-474 throughout this whole process. Even though he claims that the Liberals are in fact against the bill, the Liberals voted for the bill at second reading. They voted for extending its study at committee. They voted for extending its study in the House of Commons. It would seem to me that this is a lot of support from a party that says it is against the bill.

The members opposite, and in particular the Liberal members, do not understand the needs of farmers. If they truly understood farmers, the member for Malpeque and the Liberals would have helped our Conservative government defeat the bill.

By supporting Bill C-474 through all its stages, they have created uncertainty and instability in the agricultural community. I have had countless farm groups approach me and say that they are not sure if it is safe to invest in the agricultural sector here in Canada with the potential of the bill becoming law.

These amendments that the hon. member has put forward are harmful. Not only are they more punitive to farmers in research and development than his original bill, but they will continue to sow uncertainty within the industry.

A recent letter from a farmer, received by one of our caucus members from Alberta, stated, "As a farmer here on the prairies I depend on technology innovations to keep my farm afloat in these trying economic times and weather uncertain times. Machinery and chemical technologies have allowed me to save more soil and moisture, improve my crop quality and use safer and smaller amounts of chemicals that are more effective than ever before on the crops I grow".

This farmer goes on to say that genetically engineered canola varieties have made a huge difference to his bottom line, outyielding the old short-season varieties even in bad weather conditions. He has

serious concerns about Bill C-474. Canada has always used sound science to assess whether new ingredients, seeds and traits are safe for Canadian farmers to grow and consumers to eat. That policy makes us a leader in the world and is the only realistic way to assess risk with clear, sound scientific methods.

[*Translation*]

Most industry stakeholders, like this farmer, have concerns about support for this bill. They support an approval process strictly based on scientific principles. They are asking us to leave trade to the trade experts and safety to the scientists.

• (1845)

[*English*]

The majority of industry stakeholders, like this producer, also have concerns about supporting this bill.

The Manitoba Flax Growers Association issued a news release saying that it could not support it citing, "a lack of clarity about who would assess and decide on the issue of market harm".

The press release stated:

Manitoba flax growers are...concerned that this legislation, in its present form, could be used to offer frivolous challenges that could stall or block the introduction of new technology that is desirable.

Flax farmers and all farmers in Canada depend on innovation to compete. That is why our government is investing in agricultural innovation like research clusters for pulse crops, flax and canola. That is why farmers across Canada have embraced research and development.

New biotechnologies, including those derived through genetic engineering, help farmers control potential devastating disease and pests, improve the safety and nutrition of food and reduce usage of costly inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides and diesel fuel.

One only has to look at the remarkable growth of canola over the past 30 years to see the benefits that Canadian agricultural innovation has brought to our farmers. The 1970s saw the development of canola, a high-quality oil seed, which replaced the lower-quality grape seed varieties.

Over the past four decades canola has become a symbol of Canadian quality worldwide. Today the canola crop generates close to \$4 billion in export sales for our farmers and economic activity estimated at between \$14 billion and \$15 billion annually.

If Bill C-474 had been law at the time, I can guarantee that things would not have worked out as well for our farmers.

The Canadian Canola Growers Association has no doubts on that front. As its general manager, Rick White, told the agriculture committee in June:

Private Members' Business

If the regulatory approach in this bill had existed 30 years ago, the \$14 billion in economic activity that the Canadian canola industry generates annually would likely not exist today...future innovations and the competitiveness of the Canadian canola industry could be in jeopardy if Bill C-474 is passed through Parliament.

[*Translation*]

In the past, the industry was a leader in risk assessment and market opportunities for genetically modified products. This system was good for farmers. Decisions were made crop by crop, and farmers and processors determined the best way to proceed based on market conditions.

[*English*]

Let us talk about another success story, soybeans.

Today, three-quarters of all global acreage sown to soybeans are GE varieties. Like the canola industry, the soybean industry has also responded to market signals by developing an advanced identity-preserve system to handle non-GE food-grade soybeans. As well, the soybean sector has developed and invested in an ongoing segregation system to maintain market access and premiums for non-GE food-grade soybean exports to Japan, while also producing GE soybeans for domestic use.

These success stories and many others like them clearly demonstrate that the added red tape that the bill would impose is unnecessary and would be harmful. It also has the potential to stifle innovation.

As Mr. Jim Gowland, chair of the Canadian Soybean Council, told the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food in June:

Capitalizing on these potential opportunities that can add value to Canadian soybean growers could be put into jeopardy with the introduction of Bill C-474 and place Canada at a competitive disadvantage.

Including a market impact assessment in the regulatory process would create unpredictability for the developers of new products, who invest millions of dollars into the development of each new seed variety before it even gets planted. The last thing our farmers need in today's competitive marketplace is to see industry innovators bypass Canada when they seek new markets for their innovations and take their investment dollars to our competitors.

Our government has been a long-standing proponent of giving farmers the freedom to make their own business decisions. The Minister of Agriculture has worked hard with industry to open new opportunities for our food producers and processors by ensuring that trade is based in fair rules and sound science.

Whether it is the beef ban in Korea or country of origin labeling in the United States, we stand up for our producers whenever and wherever their interests are in jeopardy. If Bill C-474 were in force, we would be holding our trading partners to a standard that we would not prepared to meet ourselves.

Canadian farmers need access to overseas markets to prosper. Our agricultural and food exports last year exceeded \$38 billion. That is why our government takes an aggressive approach to opening up international markets for our farmers based on sound science. Indeed agriculture ministers from across Canada have agreed that a science-based regulatory system will not only foster innovation and drive the agricultural economy, it will create new markets and increase profitability for producers.

Farmers are best positioned to make decisions on what is best for their business. Our government understands that to be competitive, our farmers need timely access to the cutting edge technology in products. We must continue to put farmers first.

Bill C-474 will harm our agricultural sector, not help it. That is what farmers tell us. That is what farm groups tell us. That is why I call upon the member for Malpeque and the rest of the Liberal Party to put farmers first and help us defeat Bill C-474.

● (1850)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the parliamentary secretary's remarks, I will have to change my introduction somewhat.

First, I congratulate the member for British Columbia Southern Interior for putting the bill forward. After listening to the parliamentary secretary's remarks, like so much of what the it does, the government likes to bury its head in the sand and not recognize that there are some problems. It wants to limit debate.

The government tried to encourage Liberals, rather than have a serious debate on the issue, both pros and cons, to defeat it before it even got started. It is like what is done in the Senate. It shuts it down before there is a debate. That is the mantra of the government. It does not want to talk about the reality out there and there are some serious problems with alfalfa and wheat, as the member for British Columbia Southern Interior said in his remarks.

Bill C-474 warranted a full review of the agriculture committee, but as a result of that review, it has failed the essential test of earning a greater degree of support. However, that hearing needed to be held. It is interesting. While the parliamentary secretary criticized the hearings, half or more of his quotes were based on what was said at the hearings. Parliament and debate is all about that, having discussions and bringing witnesses forward. Sadly, the government members on the committee jeopardized that debate by filibustering and not allowing the full discussion on the bill that the committee should have had.

Let me go to the bill itself. I know the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board is yelling over there, but that is not unusual.

The intent of the legislation is "to require that an analysis of potential harm to export markets be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted". That is the major thrust of the bill.

Private Members' Business

The issue for the official opposition, in examining this legislation, was twofold. First, the bill did not challenge the integrity of Canada's current approval process for genetically-engineered or modified materials. Second, the bill did not provide an articulate and recognizable and objective process by which to conduct the analysis called for in the legislation. That is key.

The issue of GMOs and genetic engineering is one which has been controversial and is one which deserves serious debate. I mentioned a moment ago that the mantra of the government is to shut down debate before it even happens. A fact may come out with which it does not really want to deal.

As indicated earlier, Bill C-474 begins not from the position of opposition to GMOs or genetically-engineered seed or products, but from a position of accepting the reality of their use in the marketplace and ensuring they are safe and do not impact on markets negatively. As will be noted, in the content of the bill there is no reference to the mechanism by which the analysis of potential harm to export markets will be achieved.

During the course of the hearings by the committee, one of the major concerns was the means by which this analysis would be conducted in a fair and impartial way, precisely who would conduct the analysis and what kind of input stakeholders would have in determining the parameters of that analysis.

Ten amendments have put forward by the member. Really all the amendment in Motion No. 2 does is identify the Government of Canada as being responsible for doing that analysis, but the definition of how that analysis is to take place is not there.

• (1855)

That is the key component of this legislation. How would we do the analysis? What would be the role of the government, other than being responsible? What would be the role of stakeholders? What would be the role of our international competitors in the international marketplace? None of those questions are dealt with in this particular piece of legislation.

Another amendment, Motion No. 4, would make the economic analysis part of the current application process. However, no evidence was presented at committee to justify this addition.

What would be the implications, and this is a serious question, of that kind of analysis on the science-based system that we have in place?

So, those are key points that have not been answered by the discussions we had at committee, by the original proposal from the proponent of this bill or by the amendments we have before us today. I think that is a very serious shortcoming.

If I could sum up on that particular point, the parameters of the analysis on economic harm have not been identified. I think that could undermine our key science-based system we have at the moment and could have major implications on the advent of new products into the marketplace, on farmers' economic potential and certainly on our biotech research industry. There are just too many unanswered questions that, regardless of hearings having been held, have really not been answered at those hearings.

The legislation would apply to genetically engineered products developed and grown in Canada, but it would in no respect apply to the importation of similar products for processing or use in Canada. This is an oversight, I believe, that is not addressed by the amendments, which again undermines the basic integrity of the legislation.

Also, the introduction of an economic harm analysis prior to the sale, not the approval, of any genetically engineered seed would appear to layer a new and far more subjective approval process over the current accepted science-based approval process.

That is complicated wording just to basically say that there is not enough definition around what the member is trying to do with this bill, in terms of defining economic harm.

Just to sum up, yes, the amendment would make the government responsible. It does not define how it would be done or the parameters of that analysis. So I think there are major implications potentially on our science-based industry here, on the science-based approval process at the moment. Therefore, we cannot support the bill.

There is one last point I want to make, though, on the hearing process. We did hear from a number of witnesses. We were supposed to hear from several others. There is a serious concern that I think Parliament or Agriculture Canada or someone, certainly, has to address; that is, as the member for British Columbia Southern Interior indicated earlier, that there is potential risk in the alfalfa industry by the introduction of GMO, genetically engineered seeds. It would be the same in terms of the wheat industry, over a slightly longer term.

We have to recognize that those issues have to be dealt with. That is one of the benefits of having had those hearings. We recognize there are problems. The minister should recognize there are problems and the government should recognize there are problems, and they should move to address them.

The bottom line is, based on the foregoing, that because of the risk as a result of this particular bill, Bill C-474, we cannot support this bill as currently drafted.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the deputy critic for agriculture and agri-food, I have the pleasure of rising today to discuss Bill C-474, An Act respecting the Seeds Regulations (analysis of potential harm). This issue is of particular importance to me because there are many farms in my riding.

The purpose of the NDP member's bill is to require that an analysis of potential harm to export markets be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted. In other words, it requires that the sale of new GE seeds in Canada be assessed from an economic perspective.

Private Members' Business

There is currently nothing stopping a new variety of seed from being sold and grown in Canada if it is registered and passes the environmental impact assessment required under the Seeds Regulations. The new seed variety must also be assessed by Health Canada under the Food and Drug Regulations if it is destined for human consumption or by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency under the novel feeds regulations if it is destined for the production of animal feed.

First of all, I would like to say that the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-474. We believe that it is important to consider all aspects of approving a new product, especially its foreign trade implications, before adding it to the range of products already offered to producers.

At present, the trade implications of new products on the market are completely ignored in GE seed evaluations. The effects of the marketing of these seeds could be devastating for the economy. Many countries are very prudent when it comes to genetically engineered crops, and some even ban them completely. In 2010, we can no longer ignore this reality. In fact, more than 26 countries have import restrictions on genetically modified products.

In recent years, a number of factors have increased foreign countries' wariness with regard to genetically engineered seeds from Canada. The speedy approval of some of these seeds is one reason. In fact, Canadian GMOs are not systematically tested. The government relies on the companies that produce GMOs and simply reads their studies without any further assessment. It relies on the concept of substantial equivalence. If a genetically modified food is similar to a conventional food, it is not subjected to scientific testing. This is not reassuring for those countries that are proceeding with caution when it comes to GMOs.

The current trend of not evaluating economic risks could have a number of adverse effects on the Canadian market. The recent history of marketing GMOs has proven this numerous times. Take, for example, the litigation between the McCain company and Europe. In the late 2000s, producers from New Brunswick, Manitoba and Prince Edward Island sold potatoes to McCain, but the potatoes had been genetically modified to be pest resistant. In 1999, when McCain decided to stop purchasing genetically engineered potatoes, the producers were the ones punished; they were the ones who had to make adjustments and bear all the related costs. Farmers who cannot market their crops will face serious financial difficulties and even bankruptcy. Unfortunately, that is the reality for producers who are refused access to certain European or Asian markets.

I would like to quote something said by the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell during the November 18 meeting of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. He was addressing the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and said, "...the more markets our farmers have to sell into, the better it is for our farmers." Basically, the member is opposed to Bill C-474 and wants farmers to have access to a greater share of the market. Given that more countries are now tending to demand safe, GMO-free products, this bill would certainly expand markets for our producers. I would invite the member and his party to be consistent and support Bill C-474.

●(1905)

Furthermore, adding an economic assessment step to the regulatory approval process for new seeds is nothing new, per se. The industry has already voluntarily slowed or stopped the commercialization of new GM plant varieties because of market-related concerns. For instance, the GM flax known as Triffid, which has been approved for human consumption, was to have been introduced in 1998. However, in the winter of 1997, the European Union banned GM canola imports. The Canadian flax industry therefore decided not to go ahead with the marketing of the Triffid variety as planned, for fear that flax imports would be affected. In 2009, the European Union found traces of GM products in one shipment, despite all the precautions taken. It therefore decided to ban all flax imports from Canada.

Farmers are still paying the price for this unfortunate incident, given that, since 2009, all seed samples must be subjected to costly tests to ensure they are harmless. It is worth noting that, until then, 68% of Canada's flax production had been exported to Europe.

Thus, a huge portion of our production had to find other markets or was simply disposed of.

It is possible that the flax industry would have been better protected if there had been a market impact assessment before the Triffid variety was approved. Several hundred flax producers could have exported their products to the European market without any problem.

In 1995, the industry tried to compensate for the wariness of importing countries by developing voluntary guidelines. For example, the Canola Council of Canada developed a market access policy agreement that stipulates that no new varieties of canola will be sold to producers before being approved in all of the primary export markets. This policy has been respected by all stakeholders since it was developed. Thus, we can assume that if Bill C-474 were passed, it would be well received by the industry.

The type of economic assessment proposed in the bill is nothing new and it is currently being used elsewhere in the world.

Argentina has been studying the repercussions of its transgenic seeds on markets since 2004. Before a GMO is approved for marketing, the government must have expert opinions available on the impact of large-scale production on the agri-food ecosystem, the safety of livestock feed, and the absence of undesirable effects of its marketing on exports. This assessment includes an analysis of the current state of regulatory systems and the degree of acceptance by the public. Furthermore, the situation of commercial competitors, potential markets, the proportion of the crops in their trade with each country and the proportion of their imports in their total purchases are also taken into consideration. These new regulations have not stopped Argentina from remaining one of the largest producers of GMOs.

The Conservatives say that adopting Bill C-474 would result in scientific analyses being abandoned in favour of socio-economic considerations. That is false; they are not mutually exclusive. Scientific and economic assessments are complementary. There is nothing in this bill that leads us to believe that scientific assessments would be set aside.

On October 5, Mr. Matthew Holmes, Executive Director of the Canada Organic Trade Association appeared before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food and had this to say:

Bill C-474 does not establish some unrealistic threshold, nor does it give economic considerations of veto over all other considerations. It simply provides policy-makers with one more tool with which to understand the implications of their decisions, and our sector feels this is a reasonable one.

• (1910)

[English]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-474, An Act respecting the Seeds Regulations (analysis of potential harm), introduced by my hon. colleague from British Columbia Southern Interior, the NDP agriculture critic and a tireless advocate for farmers and consumers.

Bill C-474 is an amazingly straightforward bill. In just 52 words it asks simply that the government consider the export market impact of any new genetically modified seeds to be introduced to the market before allowing their cultivation. This is the same request that farmers have been making for years. I would urge the House to consider carefully what they have to say and what is at stake with this bill.

As the government knows, in September 2009, inspectors in the European Union discovered that an illegal genetically modified seed strain, CDC triffid, had contaminated Canadian flax exports. European countries promptly began recalling and quarantining Canadian flax. Prices plummeted and Canada lost 60% of its export market overnight. This ban hit our farmers hard, and they are still paying for the testing and cleanup after this international scandal.

More and more countries moved to adopt laws that limit the use of genetically modified foods. The export market for Canadian crops will continue to shrink unless we change the way that we do agriculture. For example, the countries that make up 82% of our export market for wheat have already said that if Canada begins cultivating genetically modified wheat products, the result will be a disastrous total boycott of all Canadian wheat, whether it is genetically modified or not.

Farmers obviously do not want to grow a crop that no one will buy. This is why it is critical that any assessment of new genetically modified seeds in Canada be considered in light of the impact they will have on our export market. Canadian farmers are clear that this is something they want. Given the potential consequences of another international contamination scandal, I really have to ask why the government is so adamantly opposed to the bill.

When talking about genetically modified foods and seeds, it is also important to talk about the alternatives, things like small scale and organic farming. Far too often we forget about these other options. Perhaps that is because among our largest crops, genetic contamination is so widespread that it is not even possible to grow organically, as in the case of the canola crop in Manitoba.

Private Members' Business

Transnational conglomerates such as Monsanto, Dupont, Syngenta and Bayer have been incredibly vocal in promoting themselves and their GMOs as the answer to problems such as world hunger and unpredictable crop yields due to environmental changes, all the while ensuring that their corporate bottom lines are priority number one.

Here are some important facts to consider: Eighty-seven per cent of the world's countries are GMO free. Over 90% of the arable land on this earth is GMO free. Over 99.5% of the world's farmers do not grow GMO products. In the United States, despite 20 years of research and 14 years of commercialization, GMO products have not significantly increased crop yields.

Let us be honest, GMO crops will not be the solution to things like world hunger, and the reckless use of genetic modification has the potential to do far more harm than good, both abroad and here in Canada.

Countries around the world are increasingly becoming aware of this, and that is why the market is actually turning against GMOs. The transnational corporations are aware of this turn, and that is why they vehemently oppose this market assessment of their product.

With the Conservative Party on side with these agricultural mega companies, I have to ask, whose interests is our government looking out for, those of the farmers or the conglomerates?

I would like to highlight some encouraging thoughts. While changing climates, drought and disease continue to plague farmers and their crops, exacerbating a global hunger pandemic that afflicts more than one billion people on earth, there are signs that important progress is being made without the need for genetic modification and unconscionable agribusiness practices.

One of the most important steps to improving crop yields was achieved as long ago as 1961. It was in that year that Norman Borlaug perfected dwarf wheat, a cultivar of wheat that did not topple over under the weight of its stocks, spoiling its yield. The results were staggering. By 1963 the wheat harvest was six times larger than it had been 20 years earlier. Literally millions of lives were saved. For his work he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1970. Even today his cultivars continue to be the staple food of millions of people worldwide, and all of this was accomplished without GMOs.

• (1915)

There are more success stories.

In Japan scientists have developed a drought resistant rice crop. In South Africa and the Philippines there are drought resistant maizes. The United States just developed an allergen-free peanut. In Kenya iron fortified corn has slashed the rates of childhood anemia.

Private Members' Business

All of these cultivars are making a real difference in the lives of millions of people worldwide, and all of them were done using traditional botanical graftings and selection processes, not genetic modification.

These very same botanical processes have been used for centuries. They were used to turn an ancestral inedible weed into what today we call cabbage, kale, collard greens, broccoli, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts.

Genetic modification has been proven to be wildly ineffective in delivering on its own promises. As more and more countries enact laws to ban their import, the economic risks for countries continuing to produce GMOs will continue to rise. Bill C-474 proposes simply that before new genetically modified seeds are introduced in Canada, the government must consider those risks.

Canadian farmers deserve protection from GMO contamination and from the catastrophic effects it could have on our export markets. We should not be bowing to the wishes of the transnational conglomerates that know that the market is turning away from their repressive products and practices.

Today I call on the House to vote in favour of Bill C-474 and enshrine in law measures that would ensure that farmers and consumers, not Monsanto, are at the heart of our food and seed strategy.

In closing, an issue like this is so important for farmers, for consumers and for Canada that it deserves more debate. Therefore, I move:

That, when the order for the consideration of Bill C-474 is next called, the time provided for the consideration of any remaining stages of the Bill be extended, pursuant to Standing Order 98(3), by a period not exceeding five consecutive hours.

The Deputy Speaker: Will those members who support the motion please rise in their places.

And 20 or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: More than 20 members having risen, the motion is adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if one does not have content, I guess one can always play games, which is what we are seeing here today.

It is really disturbing to see the lengths the NDP is willing to go in order to almost destroy agriculture in this country. It is very unfortunate. The bill is an extreme bill. We heard the parliamentary secretary clearly delineate some of the problems with it and there are many. There are certainly huge problems in terms of the break from sound science.

I want to thank the Liberals this afternoon for coming to their senses and reverting to the position they held in the past when they were in government, and that is the position that we should be making decisions based on sound science. We heard the member for Malpeque say that he is willing to support the government's position on this. We think that is good for farmers. We are willing to work with him in any area where we can put farmers first. Certainly, being

able to vote together on the bill will ensure that farmers are protected.

I am not sure why the NDP has consistently taken these positions that are so radically against the interests of farmers across this country. The interesting thing is I think the weakness of the bill is shown in the fact that the mover himself had to come back with 10 separate amendments in order to try to make the bill even palatable to his own people, never mind the rest of the population.

There are some very strange amendments with some very bad consequences for agriculture. One of them is Motion No. 5, which would add a new clause that states:

The analysis referred to in section 2 shall take into account the regulatory systems that govern genetically engineered seed and the crops and products that are derived from that seed in the countries that import Canadian agricultural products.

This is a very strange amendment because now we are not only dealing with a challenge to our regulatory system in terms of the fact that the NDP members do not want to take science into account, they want to take some other ambiguous impacts into account. They want to go to other countries and actually interfere with their systems as well. That is extreme. The amendment is not even clear. It does not define what is being talked about in terms of agricultural products.

One would expect that the provision would be limited to seed or grain which originally was the context of the bill, but this term being used is much more general and it certainly could be extended further. Maybe the NDP is deliberately trying to do this to capture livestock, their products and their byproducts as well. We would be getting into a situation where there are consequences that we cannot even count because there is no way of knowing what they are. The process for determining which countries import Canadian agricultural products is going to be very time consuming. If we want to talk about putting bureaucracies in place, this would certainly do that. This would put bureaucracies in place in our country. It would put bureaucracies in place in other countries as well.

It is clear that a much better way of dealing with these issues is what the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has been doing. He has gone around the world and he has been able to bring about the trade agreements that are so important. He went to China last April and was able to open up markets in China will make a huge difference for Canadian farmers.

Another free trade agreement, which the NDP opposed but which we finally passed was the one we made with Colombia which was critical for our specialty crop producers, particularly in western Canada. The NDP fought and fought against farmers' interests in trying to keep that free trade agreement from coming to reality. The minister has shown tremendous leadership. The Minister of International Trade has shown leadership as well on these files.

That is what is really benefiting our farmers. We are able to take our products around the world. We are able to take new technologies and apply them. That is going to be the future of agriculture, not this backward looking, fear-mongering stance that the NDP continues to take in its agricultural policies.

The member for Malpeque mentioned another place where the NDP is far behind the times. Hopefully, he will be joining with us as well. That is the area of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Private Members' Business

• (1920)

Clearly the NDP do not want to see western Canadian farmers succeed. This is just one more place where they have stood in the way of success in western Canada. I find it absolutely amazing.

I actually think the Liberals will probably come around on this one.

Hon. Wayne Easter: I don't think so.

Mr. David Anderson: At some point, they have to understand that business needs to be done on the farm. We have young guys who are coming out to farm as there is such a call these days.

I wish the member for Malpeque would let me speak because I want to talk about young farmers. I know he may have lost touch with agriculture, but he could certainly let me have my time.

• (1925)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member has an obligation to speak to Bill C-474. We know he is trying to mislead on the Canadian Wheat Board, but Bill C-474 is the topic tonight.

The Deputy Speaker: I believe the hon. member from Malpeque would not be implying that anyone is misleading anyone. However, I think he is raising a point of relevance. I will remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that we are on the report stage motion on Bill C-474.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, we are certainly glad to talk about Bill C-474. We need to put it in some context, and that is the context of success for farmers.

Obviously we cannot talk about farmers being successful in western Canada without talking about the freedom to sell their own products, the freedom to market their own products and the freedom to run their own businesses. Bill C-474 interferes with that almost as much as the Canadian Wheat Board interferes with that.

Mr. Speaker, you know how dead against Bill C-474 I am, so I am sure you have an idea of how important I think it is that our western Canadian farmers get freedom to market their own products, to go around the world to sell those products, to take those top-notch Canadian products across this globe so that people can understand far more than they do now how successful and how tremendous the farming sector in Canada can actually be. We would ask the other parties to join with us of course in providing that freedom for our farmers.

I will come directly back to Bill C-474 and to Motion No. 6, which is another one of the amendments that the mover himself has had to make in order to make this bill remotely palatable to even the people who want to support it.

In this motion, they want to add another new clause, which says:

The analysis referred to in section 2 shall take into account the economic impact on Canadian farmers and exporters whose established markets for registered seed or for the crops and products derived from that seed would be harmed as a result of the introduction of the new variety of genetically engineered seed.

There is a whole host of problems with this. We are reminded of canola. As the parliamentary secretary mentioned so well earlier, when canola was developed in western Canada, it gradually took off.

People did not know what the impact of canola was going to be when it was introduced.

The NDP is saying, through this bill and through this amendment, that we have to stop these things. We cannot let them come on to the marketplace. We cannot see what potential they might have. We need to look at the negative side of the equation but not at the positive side.

Canola has developed from a very small beginning, with rapeseed. Then they improved the seed varieties and brought in canola, and I believe it is accurate to say that a \$14 billion a year industry has developed from canola. The NDP would stand against that. If its bill were in place, if it had its way, the canola industry in western Canada would be wiped out.

I can tell members that if it did that, there would be virtually nothing left of the grains and oilseeds sector in western Canada because canola is a critical crop for many producers, especially those who do not want to be forced to market their product through a central marketer. Those folks, who have chosen to grow canola, grow it because not only can we grow good canola and we can grow lots of canola but we also have the freedom to market it as we choose.

There is a whole host of reasons why we should not be supporting this bill. I am thankful and western Canadian farmers and farmers across this country are thankful that the Liberals have come to their senses and have said that they will be supporting us in our opposition to this bill, because it is critical for the future of Canadian agriculture that we make sure this bill is defeated.

It is too bad that the NDP itself does not see this, that the member himself would not voluntarily withdraw this bill, because it would be much better for Canadians generally. It would probably be better, even in the House here, for those of us who know agriculture to be able to say that we have joined together, all of us have joined together here and we are going to do something that is good for farmers, rather than having one group or a couple of the parties here making the decision, once again, that they are going to oppose Canadian agriculture and not give it the chance to be the best it can be.

I could certainly talk a little more about the methodology that is involved in this bill. It is just flawed from beginning to end. The member who brought it forward wants to talk about the negative economic impact that the changes might have. He does not address the fact that there might be positive impacts from new technology, and it is once again a backwards way of looking at agriculture. It shows a disconnect from the future of agriculture.

We go out on the farm these days and there are new varieties. There is new technology. For example, people now have GPS in their tractors, they have it in their sprayers and they have it in their combines. They know down to the inch what it is they are doing, what they are putting onto their farmland, and it is certainly the same with so many other areas of technology.

This bill goes against all of that. We need to oppose it and we are thankful that the other parties across the way have decided to join with us on that. We ask the NDP to do that as well.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1930)

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for responding to the very important matter of funding decisions regarding the \$10 million promised in budget 2010 to address the issue of violence against aboriginal women.

On October 1, I asked the Minister of Justice to tell the House when we could expect to see a plan set in place for the investment of the \$10 million promised in the budget. By October 1, it had been more than seven months since the money was promised and the government had yet to disclose a plan. Again, not surprisingly, I was told by the minister that the government would reveal its plan in due time.

Well, we have all read or at least seen parts of the recent research from the Sisters in Spirit initiative, which shows that nearly 600 aboriginal women have gone missing or have been murdered. This number of missing or murdered aboriginal women is the equivalent of more than 19,000 women in the non-aboriginal community.

While it was reassuring that the government seemed to have finally noticed the importance of this issue, it now appears the government's announcement was more of a political diversion than concrete action.

Organizations on the ground have had the solutions necessary to start addressing the issue of violence committed against aboriginal women for quite some time. All that was missing was the funding and the political will from the government to act responsibly.

We need action to stop the overwhelming violence being experienced by aboriginal women. However, when the government finally did make its funding announcement in Vancouver on October 29, more than 40% of the money was dedicated to groups other than aboriginal women.

While we can all see the value of instruments and investments announced in Vancouver, the funding for them should have come from moneys other than those promised to aboriginal women. For example, \$4 million of the \$10 million promised to address violence against missing and murdered women went to the creation of a national missing persons database.

This creates significant concerns because such a database does not focus on aboriginal women alone, but rather will track both men and women from across Canadian society. While this is also necessary, aboriginal women are at the greatest risk of experiencing violence and should therefore have a specific database, such as the one

developed by Sisters in Spirit. That information is already available and must be acted upon.

I also wonder about the way missing persons reports will be filed. In my conversations with Sisters in Spirit, it was revealed that part of the issue related to the fact that police reports did not indicate the ethnicity of the women. Police only report if the subject is white or non-white. This is extremely problematic. Had the government consulted Sisters in Spirit, it would have learned about the problem and could have ensured that ethnicity was addressed in the database.

We have also learned from Sisters in Spirit and from the Native Women's Association of Canada that they were not consulted by the government. How could the government make plans concerning the well-being of aboriginal women without consulting the largest group in the country?

Why did the government fail to consult with aboriginal women before making a funding announcement? Why has it managed to fund something that it will not address the issue facing women in our communities?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Petit (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's question shows that there is misinformation out there right now about the government's response to the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women. I would first like to thank the opposition member for giving me the opportunity to correct these misunderstandings.

I think that this issue is much too serious to be politicized, because young women have been brutally killed and families are still ravaged by pain. That is why I will answer this question very carefully and try not to leave anything out.

On October 29, the Minister for Status of Women announced the seven components of the most recent investment by the government in response to the unacceptably high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women, as indicated in the Sisters in Spirit reports.

We expect that these investments will enhance law enforcement and justice system interventions. This approach is in line with our throne speech commitment to “address the disturbing number of unsolved cases of murdered and missing Aboriginal women”, which we consider to be an urgent criminal justice matter, and our budget commitment to take “concrete actions...to ensure that law enforcement and the justice system meet the needs of Aboriginal women and their families.”

This is why a portion of the money will be allocated to creating a new national police support centre for missing persons. In addition, funds will be used to ensure that police officers on the ground across Canada have easier access to comprehensive information about missing persons so they will know immediately whether a person detained for any reason has been reported missing. This measure responds to the concerns expressed in the report by the Native Women's Association of Canada. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police passed a resolution calling on the federal government to show leadership with respect to missing persons, and the federal-provincial-territorial working group on missing and murdered women recently published a report.

The new national police support centre for missing persons will help all Canadians. Permanent staff will include members of the RCMP's national aboriginal policing services to ensure that missing aboriginal women remain a top priority. The new centre's mission will be to create connections among the five police intervention units currently responsible for solving cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women and to provide specialized services to regional and local investigators.

Five of the seven measures announced focus on these other aspects. Funds will be channeled to the western provinces, where Sisters in Spirit has reported the largest number of missing or murdered aboriginal women, to help them better adapt their victim services to aboriginal culture. There are also funds available for front-line aboriginal groups and organizations to create victim support services that meet the unique needs of families of missing or murdered women, which is important. This measure will help aboriginal victims and their families.

Some funding will also be allocated to help aboriginal communities work together to develop community safety plans that focus on and meet their needs, one community at a time, to bring about change—

● (1935)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, the government has said repeatedly that the Native Women's Association of Canada is supportive of its plan. That is not true. Let us set the record straight.

On November 9, 2010, the Native Women's Association of Canada made the following statement:

NWAC originally sent out a press release saying that we were supportive of a decision being made about the \$10M allocation of funds from the Department of Justice Canada on the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. However, at closer inspection, NWAC and Sisters In Spirit have serious concerns of how this money is allocated...

This quotation makes clear that NWAC does not support the government's plan. The Conservatives are ignoring aboriginal women and further marginalizing them. This can be clearly seen with the government's refusal to continue the Sisters in Spirit initiative. The government does not actually care about aboriginal women. They are just a pawn in a Conservative shell game.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Petit: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada works with provincial and territorial authorities, as well as with aboriginal communities and groups, to help find the most effective and appropriate solutions and to design co-operative approaches to address the many factors that increase the risk of violence for aboriginal women.

The seven measures that were announced on October 29 constitute concrete, targeted action that use this front line experience. Working together, the new national police support centre for missing persons, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the five police intervention units will be able to make a real difference in law enforcement. Aboriginal communities, groups and organizations also have real experience that must be taken into consideration in order to make sustainable changes.

I am eager to see how this investment will improve the current approaches.

● (1940)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:40 p.m.)

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