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Monday, November 28, 2011

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 28, 2011

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC) moved that Bill C-299, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (kidnapping of young person), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I stand today for the protection of all children and speak to Bill C-299 and to recognize the severity of kidnapping a child under the age of 16 by a stranger, by attaching a minimum sentence of five years to anyone convicted of this crime.

A child is the most valued treasure of a parent, a gift and is bequeathed with the honour of carrying the legacy of that family forward. When that is taken from a family there are no words to describe what the family is going through except sheer terror. For the child taken by a stranger without consent, I can only imagine the fear and the anxiety the child would go through.

In its simplest terms, kidnapping came from the term “kidnapping”, slang for child stealing. Unfortunately, the act of kidnapping is the forgotten crime under normal circumstances. Stranger kidnappings in Canada are a rare occurrence; however, each incident tends to shock the nation. When child kidnapping is portrayed by the media it is usually a report of the most severe kind. A child is taken from his or her home, yard or bed, kept for ransom, for sexual exploitation and sometimes murdered.

A kidnapper is normally classified under one of four categories. The first is pedophiles, individuals who seem to identify with children better than with adults which is the reason they are able to lure children easily. The second is profiteers, individuals who are crime exploiters, who sell children to pornographers or adoption rings. The third is serial killers, methodical and ritualized, with power, dominance and control as the most frequent motivators. The fourth is childless psychotics, individuals who tend to kidnap children when they are unable to have children of their own or have lost a child and seek another in its place.

Child kidnappers are characteristically habitual offenders and carry out their assaults in a highly stereotypical *modus operandi*. They are some of the scariest offenders because in the terms of kidnapping they have planned what they are going to do and to whom, with no regard for those they are about to affect. Their sole desire is self-gratification. Once the kidnapping has occurred, their attention turns to not being apprehended by the authorities and the victim is drawn deeper into the desperation of the kidnapper.

Kidnappers must ensure that the victim conforms to each and every demand and normally that will involve physical violence. The younger the victim, the more traumatic the experience.

For the most part, if a person has resorted to this type of criminal behaviour, his or her ability for rehabilitation is remote. Why do I say that? Because these people have no regard for the care or well-being of a fellow human being. As I said before, this is about self-gratification or financial gain and nothing more.

Kidnappers seldom stalk their victims. They are usually very skilled at manipulating and luring children. In the most recent case in Sparwood, B.C., the accused entered the home of the victim and removed him while the family slept. Most kidnappers target younger children because they cannot match the strength of an adult and consequently they are quite easy to restrain.

There is one more point about why this law must be changed to better reflect the severity of the crime.

In a 2000-01 study of stranger-kidnapping cases, five cases were studied. In three of those cases, the accused was convicted of murder. In another case, the accused was before the courts and charged with murder. However, the most disturbing to me was the last case. A babysitter kidnapped a child and later returned the child unharmed. The accused was sentenced to open custody and probation. Just because a child is returned unharmed does not justify a leaner sentence. The child was taken without consent and that is just wrong.

I would like to focus for a few moments on two children from British Columbia who were kidnapped during my tenure as a police officer and another, while I was a member of Parliament.

Private Members' Business

Michael Dunahee was born on May 12, 1986 and disappeared from the Blanshard Street playground in Victoria, B.C. on March 24, 1991. He was four years old. He has never been found. His parents were mere metres away when Michael was taken. His mother, Crystal, was instrumental in getting the AMBER alert program implemented in British Columbia. She also serves as the president of Child Find for British Columbia. Police officers across Canada were kept on alert for years after Michael's disappearance and many people across Canada volunteered their time to search for Michael. It has been over 20 years since Michael Dunahee's disappearance and we hope that he is still alive and he will be found some day.

Mindy Tran was kidnapped and murdered in Kelowna, British Columbia in 1994. As a member of the RCMP stationed in Penticton at the time, I was part of an enormous team assembled to search for her. The fear that gripped the city of Kelowna was very noticeable. For a young child of eight years old to be riding her bike on her street and vanish without a trace is something that no parent should be subjected to. Mindy was found about six weeks later, not far from her home, in a shallow grave.

The third and final child I would like to speak about is Kienan Hebert. Kienan was taken from his home in Sparwood, B.C. this past September. Kienan is three years old. It was the middle of the night and he was taken from his bedroom while the rest of his family slept. For four days, the people of Elk Valley, Canada and the international community were focused on the safe return of Kienan to his family. Through the efforts of so many, and some very good police work, Kienan was returned and his kidnapper arrested.

I have presented three kidnappings with three different results. The families of these children will never be the same. A child was taken from them without consent and those responsible for the abductions did not care in any way about the effects that they would have on so many. They only cared about their own gratification.

I now focus on the most important part of this bill: standing up for the victims of kidnapping and for some of the most vulnerable in our society, our children.

As a police officer for 20 years, I worked with victims of crime in the gravest of circumstances. Those who were subjected to traumatic events such as sexual assault or kidnapping will in most circumstances always be faced with that question: Why me? Most of the time there is no answer and, as such, the victims continue to relive the event and are subject to years of mental torture. There is also fear that the crime will reoccur.

I cannot say how many times I have had to convince victims that their giving a statement and providing evidence in court was the only way for the accused to receive justice. Most victims of crime are so fearful of the accused that facing them in a secure courtroom is a very tough challenge.

•(1110)

Subsection 279(1.1) of the Criminal Code of Canada provides for minimum sentencing when a firearm is used in the commission of kidnapping. In fact, the sentencing is most severe if, "the offence is committed for the benefit of, at the direction of, or in association with, a criminal organization".

Most kidnappings involving children do not involve a firearm. The child is either lured or physically manhandled.

Our children are more important than any criminal organization. As politicians, we have an obligation to ensure that we protect them at all costs. Children are fragile. They are to be nurtured and loved. They should not be subject to intimidation or fear. They should know all of society will protect them and stand up for their well-being.

In closing, I have received questions regarding the intention of the bill and whether it focuses on the kidnapping of children by strangers. My intention is to have the mandatory prison sentence apply only in cases where a stranger commits the crime of kidnapping a child under the age of 16. I am open to considering an amendment to my bill that would clarify that intention. I call on every member of this House to stand and support the bill.

•(1115)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the clarification at the end of his remarks because on this side we have tremendous trouble with mandatory minimums and taking the discretion away from judges.

As a family doctor, I can say that many times we see women with severe post-partum depression, even to the degree that the father is given custody of the child. The way the bill is written at this time, if the very unwell mother came and took the child, hoping that was what was best for the child, that mother would be put in prison for five years.

Would the member explain exactly how he expects the bill to be applied and what amendment he is putting forward?

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, this is specifically for a stranger only; it does not involve a parent or a parent of an adopted child. This is stranger-related, nothing further.

I do not want to involve sections 280 to 283 of the Criminal Code which already identify parent abduction or those who are responsible for the child legally. This is specific to a stranger-related kidnapping.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member who spoke.

When I was a lawyer, I dealt with compensation for victims of crime. I also saw cases that were not pleasant. In general, the most serious cases are not covered by your bill. What I mean is that when there is a murder, the person is not looking at five years in prison, since the Criminal Code already automatically recognizes it as first degree murder, even if that was not the original intent.

All of the horrible crimes you spoke of are already covered in the Criminal Code by a minimum punishment of 25 years. That does not mean that the criminal will receive only 25 years, since it could be much more than that. All of that is covered by the Criminal Code.

Private Members' Business

The problem you spoke about is that people kidnap children. I am thinking about the unfortunate case where someone who kidnapped a child was sentenced to only three years in prison. But as soon as he got out of prison two years later, he killed a woman who was a corrections employee in Laval. So there is a problem.

But do we really need a minimum punishment? We would risk punishing individuals in certain situations, for example, in the case of a 21-year-old man who kidnaps a 15-year-old girl. In light of these types of situations, must we take away all freedom from judges?

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I would like to remind all hon. members to direct their comments to the chair.

The hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia.

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the member's question, this is specific to stranger abduction. If people do not know who they have been abducted or kidnapped by, this sentencing would then come into play. It is specific to strangers and nothing else.

• (1120)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Kootenay—Columbia. This is long overdue. I would like the member to talk about victims and the ramifications on victims' families. I have worked with families whose children have been abducted by strangers. I would like him to elaborate on the fact that we need to put the signal out that this is not acceptable in Canada and we cannot let criminals get away with this.

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, the families of children who are taken are also victims because in most cases, as has been mentioned, the children do not come back alive. Historically, they are found murdered, left in shallow graves or sometimes, as in the case of Michael Dunahee, never found. Families live with that horror forever and ever. We have to send a message that in these circumstances of stranger abductions, if children are found and there are no other subsequent charges that heed stronger convictions, the minimum sentence for kidnapping by a stranger would be five years.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak today to Bill C-299, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (kidnapping of young person), a private member's bill which was just introduced.

We all have the same strong feelings of revulsion and concern when a child, a young person, is the victim of a crime of this nature, in fact of any nature. I know we collectively have a great revulsion to the crime of sexual predation and sexual assaults. All of us have supported increasing and strengthening of sentences in the case of sexual assaults.

I want to talk a little bit about this particular offence in the context of the Criminal Code. I do not think the prayer that precedes the House opening is in camera in the sense that it is secret, but in the prayer there is an exhortation to ask for support to make good laws and wise decisions in this House. It is kind of in this context that I want to talk about this piece of legislation.

It is a private member's bill in the context of the Criminal Code. I think we all know the Criminal Code is a pretty thick and integrated document with all kinds of inter-related sentences, penalties, crimes

and procedures. It has been a part of our criminal law since 1892, when the first code was brought forward.

The sentence for kidnapping of any person is life imprisonment. Although that particular sentence of life imprisonment may be rare for kidnapping, it is in fact not only available but has been used, in particular, in the case of a child. I will refer members to cases. The member said quite rightly that these are extremely rare cases. The fact is that we are going back over 20 years in British Columbia to come up with the three that the member mentioned.

There are also extremely rare cases to be found with pure kidnapping. The kidnapping offence is in the code. There is a series of them. There are abduction charges, forcible confinement charges, and abduction of a child charges, all with different types of approaches and different types of sentencing.

The essence of kidnapping is that someone abducts someone else and takes them from one place to another. In appropriate cases, and I say "appropriate" in the sense that it is the sentencing judge who looks at this. I will refer members to the case of Gillen, which is also quite an old British Columbia case. The offender abducted a child from strangers in order to raise him as his own. In this case, the offender received a life sentence for the kidnapping of a two-week-old baby.

We do see the courts treating the abduction of a child in these circumstances very seriously. I have done some research in response to the member's bill. I know that he is very sincere in bringing this forward, particularly in response to the publicity surrounding the most recent case. It is natural that we would want to follow that case and see what is going to happen to this individual.

To say that, in this case, a minimum five year sentence is appropriate in all cases is uncertain. The circumstances are extremely different in all cases. If we are talking about deterrence, sending messages or that sort of thing, the sentence of life imprisonment is not only available but has been used in the province of British Columbia. If that is not a deterrent or a proper denunciation, then one would have to question whether a minimum sentence of five years is going to have any effect whatsoever.

• (1125)

I do note, and I suppose we should not talk too much about this case because it is still before the courts, there seemed to be some question of mental capacity or potentially diminished responsibility, I do not know, but the family certainly seemed to be aware of something. At one time they said that they did not think that incarcerating the individual for a lengthy period of time would be necessarily appropriate, but obviously leaving it up to the court to decide what an appropriate punishment was for this individual.

We do take these crimes extremely seriously, and so do the courts, and this is one example that I brought forward.

Private Members' Business

When we look at kidnapping cases generally, whether it is a child or an adult, sentences of 12 to 14 years are not uncommon. Six years is not uncommon, even for the abduction cases where it is not called kidnapping. The starting point, and that phrase was used the other day, is four years, so for aggravating factors it goes higher. However, for kidnapping, we commonly see sentences of 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, even more years for kidnapping, particularly if it involved premeditation, ransom and other charges of that nature.

Kidnapping offences are rare and the kidnapping of children is rarer still, but we do have in our justice system a system where the legislature, through the Criminal Code, sets out the seriousness of the offence by having a maximum penalty, and for the most serious offences, life imprisonment is the punishment. There are circumstances of first degree murder, et cetera.

It is very rare to have kidnapping cases that are simply about kidnapping. Sadly, they are often in connection with other crimes, whether they be of sexual assault or, in the most horrific of cases, murder. Even though they are rare, any case is horrific, any case is to be abhorred.

I will not make any special claim for being a parent, but I think that everyone understands how excruciating it would be if one's child were to go missing, we all feel that, even just keeping track of our children on an ongoing basis as a parent is expected to do.

There is a great deal of emotion about that. We do have a whole bunch of individual circumstances. The mover and one of the other speakers mentioned the difference in spousal situations where there is a dispute over custody.

No one is condoning the other spouse taking the child in these circumstances, but these cases are treated extremely differently by the courts, even in the extreme cases where a child may be taken to another country for some number of years.

These to me are very abhorrent cases as well, where a child is being deprived of the company, custody, and being able to grow up with the mother or other spouse, sometimes without any reason. It is not that the child would be endangered or anything with the other spouse, but is abducted just for mere reasons of a custody dispute, to resolve an uncertainty, or to prevent court proceedings. These are not excuses for the kind of child abduction that unfortunately takes place in spousal disputes.

To get back to the kidnapping, generally speaking we have a problem with private members' bills changing the Criminal Code. We just had an omnibus crime bill where all sorts of minimum sentences would be imposed. If that was important to the government, why was it not part of that?

Private members can introduce whatever bills they want, but it is the government and the Department of Justice that has the responsibility for shepherding the Criminal Code. As a matter of government policy if there are wholesale changes, they could be brought forth and debated through the whole process.

Generally speaking, changes to the Criminal Code by private members are a very difficult thing for us to accept as the official opposition. We have not seen a strong need for this in terms of either

the prevalence of the offence or the failure of the courts to handle it properly.

As noted by another speaker, the mandatory minimum sentences here take away the discretion of the courts to fashion an appropriate remedy, taking into account all the circumstances of the case.

• (1130)

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak to the bill before the House.

I will begin with a quote that sums up the government's approach quite nicely:

If one says "mandatory life imprisonment" quickly and often, without thinking about it too deeply, it sounds tough and that is what politicians like to do. It is easier and cheaper than taking time and committing resources to the development of policies that can address the causes of crime and reduce its incidence. The "tough" approach appeals to people who are driven by retribution; and they vote.

It is important to define what a mandatory sentence is. Ruth McColl provided a good definition of "mandatory sentencing" when she said:

"Mandatory sentences" are those sentences which a judicial officer is required to impose no matter what the circumstances of the offence. In other words, the judicial officer has no discretion to impose a higher or lower sentence depending upon the nature of the crime.

At their roots these types of bills emanating from the Conservatives suggest a lack of trust in our judicial system. The purpose of punishment for an offence is complex. The duty of the justice system is to protect the community from persons committing offences and to impose such sentences that are proportionate to the offence. In applying punishment, the justice system seeks to deter others by sending a message that such offences have consequences. The justice system must, by definition, be a just one.

That was not always the case. There was a time when punishment for offences was completely disproportionate to the offence, often arbitrary and inconsistent. It was that sense of injustice and the absence of proportionality that led to many reforms in England hundreds of years ago. Some of those reforms placed limits on the king's power to mete out punishment. It led to the introduction and evolution of the common law of which we in Canada are the beneficiaries.

The principle of proportionality is not a new one. It may be new to the Conservatives, but its origins are actually found in the Magna Carta of the 13th century. Clause 20 of the Magna Carta states:

A freeman shall not be amerced for a slight offense, except in accordance with the degree of the offense; and for a grave offense he shall be amerced in accordance with the gravity of the offense.

The subsequent centuries led to many more reforms and constraints on the king and the emergence of the Bill of Rights in 1689. A quick read of the Bill of Rights highlights the excesses of the monarchy in the exercise of justice, including excessive bail and fines and the imposition of punishments that were deemed to be illegal and of a cruel nature. That was the context in 1689.

Despite the emergence of the Bill of Rights, and the Magna Carta before it, mandatory penalties were applied to a long list of offences.

Let us use as an example the idea of capital punishment in old England. In the early 1800s in England there were an estimated 160 offences for which one could be sentenced to death and many people were executed.

William Blackstone, the famous English jurist, and yes, a Tory politician, wrote:

Yet, although in this instance we may glory in the wisdom of the English law, we find it more difficult to justify the frequency of capital punishment to be found therein; inflicted (perhaps inattentively) by a multitude of successive independent statutes, upon crimes very different in their natures. It is a melancholy truth, that among the variety of actions, which men are daily liable to commit, no less than a hundred and sixty have been declared by Act of Parliament to be felonies without benefit of clergy; or, in other words, to be worthy of instant death.

It was the uniform nature of sentences without regard to mitigating factors that caused Blackstone difficulty, and rightly so. Back then it was not uncommon with that lengthy list of offences for a child over the age of seven to be sentenced to death because the law said so without regard to circumstances. Today we would find that notion absurd and even horrifying.

● (1135)

The penalty and punishment had no regard to circumstance, age, or any other mitigating fact. It was so because it was a mandatory penalty. It did not allow a judge any leeway to assess a situation or to apply any sense of proportionality.

Another example of the use of mandatory penalties in England was the crime of arson. Again, despite the Bill of Rights with its roots in the Magna Carta, and despite the slow move toward proportionality in sentencing, England in the mid-18th century really had an issue with arson and applied a standard that would rightly be viewed as cruel and unusual in modern society, at least on this side of the House.

With few exceptions, arson was an offence met upon conviction with the sentence of death, regardless of age. Imagine, setting a grass fire or burning an outhouse led to a sentence of death, without regard to the circumstances.

Eventually, as the rights of individuals and a more enlightened and educated society emerged, jurists were given the power to assess cases and apply law in light of mitigating factors. That is the way it must be.

Should the punishment for an individual stealing \$10,000 from a bank be different from that of a young child stealing a set of golf balls from Walmart? Yes, of course. In order to say yes to that question, one must instinctively see the injustice that would arise if the sentencing were the same. It is for that and many other reasons mandatory sentencing is problematic.

Here in modern Canada, the Supreme Court of Canada has already determined that in some instances a mandatory sentence of seven years for certain drug offences is unconstitutional and deemed cruel and unusual punishment under the charter. The court said:

A punishment will be cruel and unusual and violate s. 12 of the Charter if it has any one or more of the following characteristics:

(1) The punishment is of such character or duration as to outrage the public conscience or be degrading to human dignity;

Private Members' Business

(2) The punishment goes beyond what is necessary for the achievement of a valid social aim, having regard to the legitimate purposes of punishment and the adequacy of possible alternatives; or

(3) The punishment is arbitrarily imposed in the sense that it is not applied on a rational basis in accordance with ascertained or ascertainable standards.

I realize that perhaps my presentation today is tilted toward the history and evolution of criminal law, but history did not begin this morning. We are inheritors of the common law from our forefathers. It is important to note historical experience and to learn from it.

I have no doubt that members opposite believe that their approach to law is one that makes them feel happy inside. It is a “hang 'em high” approach for sure. The Conservatives would have loved the 18th century version of justice in England.

Mandatory minimums are a failed policy, and stacking our Criminal Code full of them does nothing to reduce crime or improve public safety. Mandatory minimums do not advance the goal they purport to reach, that of crime prevention and of deterrence. We have examples from the world over, but we do not need to look beyond our borders for proof.

Our own Department of Justice published a study in December 1990. Members will note that was under a Progressive Conservative government. The study was called “A Framework for Sentencing, Corrections and Conditional Release, Directions for Reform”. Page nine reads:

The evidence shows that long periods served in prison increase the chance that the offender will offend again. In the end, public security is diminished rather than increased if we ‘throw away the key’.

The United States Sentencing Commission said earlier this month that mandatory minimum sentences are often “excessively severe”, not “narrowly tailored to apply only to those offenders who warrant such punishment” and “not applied consistently”.

● (1140)

The truth is that mandatory minimum sentences also have a disproportionate impact on those minority groups that already suffer from poverty, deprivation and disadvantage. That is certainly well known within our aboriginal community.

Mandatory minimums do not alleviate or address this problem; rather, they exacerbate it. To the Conservatives, the only thing they are tough on is evidence, facts and reality. We are seeing first-hand the wholesale importation of the American view of justice. It is irrational.

If my words seem particularly pointed this morning, it is because I worry about this country. I worry about the right-wingers across the aisle who are destroying the fabric of the justice system and replacing it with an American-style system that has been proven not to work. The member opposite and his party do not much care for statistics and evidence; what matters is how they feel. That cannot be the basis for making law.

Private Members' Business

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to voice my support for private member's Bill C-299, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (kidnapping of young person), which was introduced on September 29 by the member for Kootenay—Columbia.

The bill proposes to impose a mandatory minimum penalty of five years on those convicted of kidnapping a child. Its objective is, without doubt, compelling in its simplicity. We must ensure a strong criminal justice response to those who would harm our children. I would like to be able to stand in this place and say that surely we can all agree that such offenders must be held to fully account for their crimes.

However, after listening to the purported history lesson on the law by the Liberal member for Charlottetown, I proffer more recent history. Before this government took office in 2006, there were already 40 mandatory minimum penalties to be found in the Criminal Code of Canada, either introduced by his party or never repealed by that party.

I understand that a recent British Columbia case, which took place in September of this year in the sponsoring member's riding, has brought this issue once again to the fore. A young child was taken from the safety of his home. That child was three years of age. The authorities mobilized quickly to ensure his safe return and, thankfully, the child was returned safely to his home. However, too often this is not the case.

Such cases remind us that we must remain vigilant in ensuring that we have in place a comprehensive response to these types of cases. We have heard about our tool box of offences that apply when these crimes are committed and comprehensive laws are important, but they are not enough. Significantly, we also have in place initiatives aimed at preventing these crimes from happening in the first place, as well as achieving effective enforcement of these laws. When such offences are committed, it is of extreme concern to the whole community.

Bill C-299 is an important piece of our broader response to this complex issue. This broader response includes the RCMP's Canadian Police Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, which is home to the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre and the National Missing Children Services. The National Missing Children Services, which has been in operation since 1986, oversees the our missing children program, a program that is integral to the successful search for, recovery and return of a missing child to parents. It is an investigative and collaborative mechanism designed to coordinate missing children investigations. Such investigations are often complex and can span multiple police agencies and jurisdictions.

Reflecting this complexity, five government departments and agencies work closely together on this program: the RCMP, the Canada Border Services Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Foreign Affairs Canada and Justice Canada. Specifically, the National Missing Children Services assists law enforcement agencies in the investigation, location and return of a missing child by collaborating on cases with municipal, regional, provincial and national law enforcement agencies. It also provides a number of

services, such as computer age progression service; posting missing children photographs on the Our Missing Children website; distributing posters of missing children to partners, such as Walmart Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency and Passport Canada; managing a transportation reunification program for parents with financial needs to pick up their children; and liaising with the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre investigators on Internet luring cases.

Also, research conducted by this unit contributes to policy development, the advancement of investigative processes and helps to better understand the nature and scope of the problem of missing children in Canada.

• (1145)

Another significant initiative is AMBER Alert. In 2004, AMBER Alert was implemented in every Canadian province. This alert is a voluntary national co-operation effort between police and local broadcasters to rapidly disseminate information about a child who is believed to have been abducted and whose life is believed to be in grave danger. The National Missing Children Services provides information to law enforcement agencies by coordinating and monitoring the implementation of this alert system.

In addition, supported in part by the Government of Canada, as well as private sector organizations, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection is a non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to the personal safety of all children. The centre's new MissingKids.ca website provides a link and an information portal for parents, particularly of missing children, and an in-depth resource of law enforcement agencies across Canada. It is designed to assist in the location of missing children, provide educational materials to help prevent children from going missing, be an information resource centre on missing children and coordinate efforts and assist stakeholders in the delivery of missing children's services.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to review these comprehensive initiatives that both implement preventive measures and seek to achieve effective enforcement of our criminal laws on this issue. However, I agree that we can always do more and Bill C-299 provides us with an opportunity to do just that.

Obviously, it would be better to prevent these crimes altogether from happening in the first place. However, sadly, despite our best prevention efforts, we know they do happen. It is not a matter that they do not happen very often. One is too many and one is too many for any family who has been put in this position. We need to be able to respond effectively and appropriately when they do.

There are many Criminal Code offences that may apply to cases involving kidnapping of children, depending on the facts of a given case. These include: kidnapping, subsection 279(1); forceable confinement, subsection 279.1(2); child abduction, sections 280 and 281; and a number of other offences, including child sexual offences, sections 151 to 153; general sexual offences, sections 271 to 272; and even the luring a child offence, section 172.1(1), which criminalizes communicating with a child by means of a computer system, such as the Internet, for the purposes of facilitating the commission of any of the listed child sexual and abduction offences.

Private Members' Business

Our laws are comprehensive and I am pleased to have the opportunity to support a legislative initiative that would further strengthen these laws. Bill C-299 would ensure that a stronger, more appropriate penalty is imposed upon those who kidnap children. This is not only a praiseworthy objective but also a significant enhancement of our current criminal justice response to this very serious issue.

I understand that the sponsor of the bill has expressed openness to considering an amendment that would clarify the intention of the bill. It is now clear that the hon. member's intention was always to capture the kidnapping of children under 16 by strangers, not parents or those who would stand in loco parentis. Having practised family law for many years before becoming a member of Parliament, this distinction I know to be very important. I am happy that the hon. member is willing to clarify this and I am sure it is something we can consider if and when the bill is studied by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

I support Bill C-299 and I encourage others to join me in my support. I thank the member for Kootenay—Columbia for giving us the opportunity to discuss these issues. They are, undeniably, of national importance. We all need to do everything we can to keep our communities and our children safe.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure today that I bring to bear my experience as a criminal lawyer after six long months away from the courts.

The current matter before Parliament provides me with an opportunity to make a case that, I hope, will be taken up by my fellow lawyers. First of all, I have to say that my colleagues have often described my interventions as *obiter dictum*, that is to say that my comments are tangential. However, to my mind, the facts that will be presented today should be brought to the attention of Canadians, even though I do not attach much importance to minimum sentences and other technicalities.

Therefore, I must say that my first reaction, with respect to the bill submitted to the House for consideration, naturally was to inquire as to the position of the Barreau du Québec on the issue. This allowed me to focus my presentation to the House on the considerations pertaining to the kidnapping of children by strangers. As we have already heard, that is today's subject.

This quite deliberate focus will nevertheless result in consideration of the responsibilities that must be assumed by the father, the mother, the guardian or the person with legal custody of a child to prevent such a social tragedy.

In keeping with my previous speeches, I will inform the House of the social realities and repercussions of crimes against the person that have been perpetrated in Canada's aboriginal communities. It is especially appropriate to take this approach to this issue because the kidnapping and disappearance of aboriginal young people is a reality in Canada. It is such a current issue that, at the meeting of AFNQL chiefs last week in Ottawa, this matter was again discussed by the members and the chiefs heard testimony about this from the

Anishinabe community. It seems that young women were still disappearing recently from this community. This was also the theme at the Sisters In Spirit walk in which I participated in Montreal just over a month ago. Representatives of communities across Canada chronicled the disappearances that have taken place not just in British Columbia, but all over Canada.

The notion of kidnapping echoes what happened in the past in communities dealing with the effects of Indian residential schools. Having worked on and dealt with a few cases of financial compensation linked to Indian residential schools, I can assure you that those communities regard the experience as a kind of kidnapping. RCMP officers showed up at people's homes and simply took the children and cut them out of the family unit. It was like kidnapping. I wanted to make this point clear.

With that part of history now behind us, it seems that many situations compromising the physical integrity of youth are currently happening on reserves in Canada. Because of the deterioration of the social fabric in some aboriginal communities in Canada, negative influences are corrupting young people who are struggling with serious identity crises. As we know, elements of the criminal underworld have been able to infiltrate family units and the clan dynamic that is characteristic of aboriginal communities, all with a view to perpetrating criminal activities in remote regions.

According to an Amnesty International report published in 2009, sexual predators and people who commit crimes against individuals in general deliberately target aboriginal people, since those acts can be motivated by racism or by the belief that society's apathy regarding the well-being and safety of these aboriginal young people will allow the criminals to escape justice.

The obvious social and cultural challenges that some of these communities face on a daily basis constitute fertile ground for the corruption and exploitation of disillusioned youth. This finding is especially damning considering that, last week—so this is very recent—the QMI Agency reported that, in the western provinces, most children involved in the sex trade are aboriginal.

• (1155)

This is where parental authority comes into play. I will draw from empirical experience and my personal experience to illustrate what I mean. Having spent most of my life on a native reserve, I think it is important for me to offer some criticism about the laissez-faire attitude within many family units in my home community.

In some cases, youth who are drifting through life do not have model parents. In short, the youth are drifting because their parents are drifting. The lack of parental supervision stemming from the climate of infantilism that can be seen on the reserves paves the way to exposing children to criminal elements. When I talk about the climate of infantilism, I am of course referring to how the parents in the communities distance themselves from the parental role, which is ultimately theirs.

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We know that traditionally, in the woods, young people enjoyed a freedom and an independence that allowed them to hunt and provide for the family unit. However, transposing this reasoning and these facts to contemporary realities is dangerous. Nowadays, in the communities, young people are forced to grow up too fast and take care of their younger brothers and sisters. Often the parents revert back to being adolescents themselves and the young people end up having to support the family. Again, this paves the way to criminality.

Accordingly, it is important to distinguish between kidnapping offences involving the father, the mother, the guardian or the person having the lawful care or charge of the child and offences involving third parties. I know that hon. members have emphasized this distinction throughout their speeches. Although some cases might be handled in criminal court, most cases involving people who have parental authority are referred to family court.

We know that matters involving habeas corpus, custody and child support are referred to family court in Quebec. I think cases of kidnapping by a parent should be—and are—dealt with in civil court since the parents ultimately have parental authority over those children. This also includes oversight over custody and all manner of things.

All of this is respectfully submitted.

•(1200)

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to commend my colleague, the member for Kootenay—Columbia, for putting forward Bill C-299.

This is an important bill to strengthen Canada's legislation on kidnapping. As an RCMP officer for over 20 years, this member has been on the front lines, protecting and serving many communities throughout B.C. My own son is an RCMP officer. I thank the member for his service to our country.

The member has tabled a bill that I strongly support. Bill C-299 will amend the Criminal Code under subsection 279 (1.1) to include a mandatory minimum sentence of five years' imprisonment if the kidnap victim is under 16 years of age. This is an important amendment, as it recognizes the grave implications of kidnapping a minor.

I want to recognize that this legislation focuses on stranger abductions, which are abductions by someone other than the parent or the legal guardian.

During his comments, the member for Kootenay—Columbia referenced a number of kidnapping cases that he was involved in, some with heartbreaking outcomes. The abduction of a child is an egregious crime that has significant implications on the child, the child's parents and family, and the community at large.

The impact on the child is most serious, as the child is often sexually or physically abused. If the child is never rescued, this abuse can go on for years. In other cases, the children are murdered and never have the opportunity to live out their lives. In those cases in which the children are rescued, they often face years of physical and psychological trauma.

It has been documented that the impact of abduction on children includes depression; loss of community; loss of stability, security and trust; excessive fearfulness, even of ordinary occurrences; loneliness; anger; helplessness; disruption of identity formation; and fear of abandonment.

In 2003, the RCMP report entitled *The Abduction of Children by Strangers in Canada: Nature and Scope* noted that teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17 years were at the highest risk and more likely to be abducted by strangers. I want to emphasize a few other important statistics from this report on the profile of Canadian child abduction victims.

Female children are more at risk; however, younger victims were found to be more often male, aged from birth to age three. Females from pre-school through high school, aged three to 18 years, were at least three times more likely to be abducted than males. When murder followed an abduction, adolescent females aged 13 to 17 years were at the highest risk, followed by young females aged one to 12 years, then young males, and then adolescent boys.

Parents and families are also put through devastating emotional trauma in having their children ripped away from them. They face significant anxiety, not knowing the condition of their children or if they will ever be reunited. There is often deep guilt around whether they could have done anything different to prevent the kidnapping. There is also a general fear and anxiety placed on communities where the abduction has taken place.

In Canada, numerous stranger abductions occur every year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): 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.

The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul will have six minutes remaining when this matter returns to the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

MARKETING FREEDOM FOR GRAIN FARMERS

Hon. Ted Menzies (for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board) moved that Bill C-18, An Act to reorganize the Canadian Wheat Board and to make consequential and related amendments to certain Acts, be read the third time and passed.

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• (1205)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It has come to my attention that in the gallery this afternoon, there may be a demonstration sponsored by some government members. Mr. Speaker, you should be aware that on Agri-ville.com, there is a note that says, “Randy is looking for folks that might get to Ottawa tomorrow—yes, tomorrow. The bill will make third reading, and I gather he would like some clappers”.

Mr. David Anderson: “Clappers”; there's one.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Wayne Easter: While there was a demonstration in the gallery that caused a considerable amount of flack, of course I want nothing to do with it. However, I wonder if this “Randy” might be the member for Prince Albert. In fact, I know there was a personal email from the member for Prince Albert.

I would question and I would wonder why the government would be encouraging clappers into the gallery for a bill that is so undemocratic in its very being. It takes away the voice of farmers; it takes away their vote and it actually destroys single desk marketing.

Mr. Speaker, I am just giving you forewarning to expect a group of clappers. There are not many who apply for intake, and this is a serious matter.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, perhaps in light of this information it would be fitting for you, as the Chair of this place, to remind everyone in the gallery that they are not allowed to clap in the gallery. They are not allowed to lean over the edge. They are not allowed to drop paper. They are not allowed to make any noise. They are not allowed to jeer or boo.

If the government is parachuting in a bunch of people to try to disrupt Parliament, perhaps we should put some order into this debate at the front end, instead of allowing the Conservatives to come in here and steamroll over the rights of Canadians with their undemocratic legislation and to disrupt Parliament with a bunch of goons and stooges they parachuted in here and paid for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please.

If the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre had waited, that was precisely what I was going to do: remind all members of Parliament and all members of the public who are sitting in the gallery of the rules of this place. People in the gallery may not participate in the goings-on here on the floor; if anyone in the gallery has such intentions, I would remind him or her that it is not allowed and it is not accepted in this place.

With that, let us resume debate.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary for the Canadian Wheat Board.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that on our side of the issue, our supporters are much more mature than we see from some of the other supporters on the other side. If the member from the NDP had

wanted to give this lecture, perhaps he could have given it to his young colleague from Churchill last week when she signed in someone who did disrupt the House.

The folks who have come here today are here to celebrate the bill and we are very happy to have them. In fact, over 60 farmers have come here from western Canada at their own expense. They are excited to be here today because they believe in freedom. I am sure they will be in the gallery and will spend the day with us. They are as excited as we are that we are finally at third reading on Bill C-18.

A lot of these folks are my heroes. I get very disappointed when I hear the member for Malpeque and my colleague from Winnipeg denigrate them. He called them goons and stooges. I actually call them friends, and I am proud they are my friends. They are people I have looked up to for many years because they have been willing to stand with the courage of their convictions. This is a very important issue to them and we look forward to moving ahead with them.

I should point out as well, we have two agricultural ministers, the ministers from Alberta and Saskatchewan, who are here this morning. They felt it was important enough to let Canadians know that this issue needed to move ahead. Members probably saw them at the press conference in which they talked about how this showed that democracy did work. One of the ministers said that 10 farmers were jailed and because of that, this was a good day and they needed to be here.

It is time to move ahead with the bill. It is time it move to the Senate and be passed so that by January 1, western Canadian farmers can have the same rights as every other producer across the country.

A number of my colleagues will speak later. I know they will talk about some of history of this, but I want to review it for a few minutes because I know some of the folks opposite either do not know, or do not want to know, the history behind the Canadian Wheat Board and why it was established.

People need to understand that the prairie pools were established in the 1920s and worked very well. Through the 1920s, they were voluntary pools and by 1927 they handled over 50% of the grain deliveries on the prairies. That was all voluntary. The other 50% of the grain was delivered by producers. They were free to market it as they chose. That system worked very well. It is interesting that when the pools started off, farmers did not have grain handling facilities and within a couple of years, they constructed some of their own facilities. Then by 1927 they had about 15% of the facilities on the prairies, but handled over 50% of the grain. Therefore, a lot of the arguments we hear from the opposition today are not anymore valid today than they were in the 1920s.

From 1923 to 1931, the open market served as an alternative channel. Competition was allowed and people were comfortable with that. In the 1930s the depression hit and the pools had some financial troubles. They were trying to buy grain when they should have been selling it and they went broke. That is when the government stepped in.

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In 1943, in the middle of the war, a decision was made. A couple of things happened. There had been some small crops, the price of grain was skyrocketing and there was need for cheap grain in Europe, so the Government of Canada stepped in. The order-in-council said that there were two reasons that the board was made mandatory in 1943. One was to stop inflation and the other was to supply cheap grain to Europe. Both of those things cost farmers money.

Therefore, right from the very beginning of the imposition of the monopoly farmers paid the price for it. There are farmers in western Canada who recognize that even in those days, in the 1940s and 1950s, they were paying the bill for other people. That continued through the 1960s and 1970s and as it did, more and more opposition built up toward the bill. In the 1990s farmers finally had enough. A group of farmers, "Farmers for Justice", was formed to stand up for the rights of farmers.

We know the story. The Liberals were in power. The farmers tried to export their grain, some of them as little as a few pounds of grain. They took it to the United States and when they came back, they were arrested and charged. It was not good enough for the Liberal government to charge them, but then insisted they go to jail as well. We have a number of people with us today who had the courage of their convictions, who went as far as being willing to go to jail in order to try to get freedom for the rest of us.

• (1210)

It is a pretty remarkable thing to go from the situation in the 1940s, when the voluntary situation was made involuntary and was imposed on people. Then we get to the 1990s and early 2000s and people want a change. Why would that happen? What kinds of things would happen that would make western Canadian farmers demand these kinds of freedoms?

First, they saw that other farmers had those freedoms and they wanted the same freedom. Even more basic than that, there has been a huge change in what happens on the farm. In the old days, when we talked about transportation, we talked about horse wagons and eventually one tonne and two tonne trucks that people would use to haul their grain to town. They could only haul it a few miles to the local elevators, with 30 or 40 bushels at a time. It gradually evolved to three tonnes and then to tandems and now today we have huge semis, B-trains that haul 1,500 bushels at a time and people can haul hundreds of miles if they need to.

Short lines have now been established, which were not in place in the old days when there were only two railways with which people had to deal. Short lines give them options for transportation. On the farm, things have gone from steel wheels to GPS. They have gone from one bottom plows to autosteer sprayers. They have gone from standing sheaves in the field to 450 horsepower combines.

Communications have changed almost as much as the technology. There was hardly any in the old days. People had their information locally and most of them did not even have phones. They would haul their grain to the local elevator, find out what the price was and that was the best they could do. Maybe they had a weekly newspaper or radio that they listened to once in a while, but they were dependent on the local elevator agent for their help. That has changed, and we all know that.

When farmers get up in the morning, the first thing they check is their BlackBerrys and prices. They are ahead of the grain companies. They know at the beginning of the day what they need. They are on the Internet, on Twitter, on Facebook. The daily pricing is available instantaneously to them. They rely on that.

I can give a couple of examples of how the Wheat Board does not and did not react in the old days and why we need change today. I have told this story before. My area in the early 1990s had some frozen grain. The Wheat Board told us it really did not want to market it, so we looked for another market and found one in Montana. We told Wheat Board we would sell our grain in Montana. Then we had a call back from the grain company telling us not to bother, that it was able to buy grain. It turned out it was buying our grain for quite a bit less money than we had arranged with the company. We followed the trucks from our elevators in Frontier, Climax and Shawnavon, Saskatchewan, across the border and to Montana. We watched them dump that same grain into the pit. We had done a better job of marketing it than the Wheat Board had. It took the grain away from us and sold it at the price it wanted to.

Last fall we had an issue with grading of lentils. In the past these issues would take weeks and weeks to generate even with the frozen grain issue. It took several weeks for us to find out what we would do with it and how we would react. With the grading of lentils, within two or three days people were calling us and telling us there was an issue. Things were pretty much resolved within a week. How things changed with the communication, when farmers were unable to find out what was going on. Now they know ahead of everyone else what needs to be done.

Times have changed. There is a new era that has finally arrived and it is providing the same opportunities for western Canada that farmers across the country have had for such a long time.

I was thinking about this the other day and a question came to my mind. Can those of us in western Canada even understand what freedom will really be all about when we have been locked in this structure for so long? I want to talk about a few of those possible potential opportunities.

First, there are growing and specific variety opportunities. We watched the Swift Current research station develop grain varieties over the years. Many of these varieties because of our grading system have ended up being grown in Montana, not in western Canada. We have had to watch other people grow the grains that we have paid to develop and that should have been available to us.

We are moving into a new era with things like bioproducts and nutraceuticals. What a good time for western Canadian farmers to be able to participate in those kinds of things. We are moving into a time where there are niche strains, where people around the world are asking for small lots of specific grains. Farmers in western Canada have asked for years if it is possible for them to export just a small amount of a particular type of barley or a particular type of durum. The answer has always been no, that the Canadian Wheat Board is not interested in those small lots.

Government Orders

●(1215)

There will be marketing opportunities. There will be opportunities to market through the new Canadian Wheat Board or marketing oneself. People will have a real choice in their marketing.

There will be business opportunities. We have already heard of some of the companies that want to do the value added. They want to spend money in western Canada. That is a different story from what we have heard over the years.

Companies are already committing to new spending. They are talking about investing and new companies are talking about coming into western Canada for the first time. How exciting is that for those of us who live there?

There are personal business opportunities as well. There are at least two examples in the past where those things have been stifled. A young couple I was baking bread and taking it the local farmers' market. The couple's business started to grow and grow and it was making more and more bread. One of the supermarkets wanted to put the couple's bread on its shelf. It was at that point the Wheat Board stepped in and told the young couple that it did not need to do this, that it would market the couple's grain and it did not need to worry about this. Therefore, the couple was not able to continue with it.

Another example was somebody who wanted to grind flour. The Wheat Board interfered with him at every level it possibly could over the years. I know he will be one of those folks who has been waiting a long time for the freedom he will finally have.

On a bigger scale, farmers who wanted to start durum processing plants and pasta plants in western Canada were not even allowed to deliver their own grain to their own companies. The Wheat Board stepped in and disallowed that, so we watched those plants being built in North Dakota.

Entrepreneurs will have all kinds of opportunities. It will be homegrown products, businesses that want to export specialty flours and pastas. There are all kinds of opportunities.

This morning provincial ministers said that they believed there would be provincial opportunities to diversify the economy of the provinces as well. We have always been hewers of wood, drawers of water and growers of grain. This gives us a chance to do so much more.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about innovation, because an open market will attract investment, encourage innovation and create value-added jobs. We will be building a stronger Canadian economy, not just a stronger western Canadian economy.

The wheat and barley business in Saskatchewan alone is a major driver of our economy, bringing almost \$2 billion per year to the farm gate. I am confident we can grow that business under marketing choice. Stephen Vandervalk, president of the Grain Growers of Canada, said, "We hope that with an open market we will see far more milling, malting capacity, and we will not need to ship our grain across the mountains". I think that is the wish of every western Canadian farmers.

We are sensing a new excitement about value added. I already mentioned that we have commitment. For example, Alliance Grain Traders recently announced a \$50 million multi-purpose durum and pulp milling facility in Regina. It is great news for durum growers, especially when we hear that Italy is set to increase its imports, due to a supply shortfall in the EU.

Marketing freedom is fundamentally about innovation and about freeing our farmers so they can innovate as well. Innovation has always driven growth in agriculture. I talked a little about that earlier. That is one of the main reasons why our government is working right now to bring marketing freedom to wheat and barley growers in western Canada.

The other day I talked about how value-added processing has taken place in so many of the other crops, the open market crops like canola, oats and flax. We need to have this opportunity for grains as well. We need to tap into the new niche markets for wheat and barley. We can do that through specialty pools, through value-added investment and through all kinds of other innovative strategies.

This will work for the entire value chain, attract new investments to the prairies, create new jobs and revitalize rural communities. It will grow wealth in western Canada. That is why we need to move ahead with this.

I mentioned the other day about canola and flax, but I do not think the opposition understands how big those crops are in western Canada. They have grown from virtually nothing to where canola is now the major crop in western Canada in terms of value. It brings almost \$5.5 billion to the farm gate each year. It is driving 70% of world canola exports. It has become a flagship product of our agricultural industry. It demonstrates world-class innovation. It demonstrates the Canadian reputation for food quality. These are the kind of things we can carry over to grain as well, once the bill passes.

Flax is another one of those Canadian success stories. It is used in a host of products, animal feed, flooring, all different kinds of things. We are one of the largest suppliers of flax in the world, accounting for almost half of the world's supply.

●(1220)

Those are just two examples of areas where western Canadians have been able to do their own thing, go to market and grow their own product. They have been extremely successful at that.

I want to talk a little about our agricultural scientists. Over a century ago they tested a new variety of wheat that opened up the west and made Canada into a global grain powerhouse. Today I feel we are standing on the edge of another new era such as that. It is one that will breathe new life into our grain industry and open up a world of possibility for farmers.

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I think that one of those developments that scientists are doing for us is kind of a neat thing. We put \$4 million into the wheat genome project in order to get new varieties to farmers faster. Just recently, a new exciting durum variety was developed by our scientists in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. It has come onto the market and it offers growers strong yield advantage and improved disease resistance. I do not think that it is a coincidence that its name is AC Enterprise. What better way to usher in marketing freedom than to bring a new spirit of enterprise to our durum producers across the Prairies.

There is a record to be broken in the number of investments our government has made to support Canadian farmers. We have been committed to farmers. We stand with them and we have their backs. We will continue to make those investments that will help bring the sector forward. We want them to have long-term prosperity.

Farmers do not want to be held back by antiquated systems that restrict their ability to run their businesses as they see fit. I am proud that our government is willing and able to bring marketing freedom to western Canadians farmers.

I am very disappointed with the board of directors at the Canadian Wheat Board and their reaction to this bill. They had the option to stand up for farmers and it is time that they did because we are moving ahead here.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: They did.

Mr. David Anderson: I am getting a little heckling from someone across the way. He does not like the fact that we are moving ahead and giving farmers choice. He would like to keep them, as I said earlier, in an antiquated system that allows them no choice. Somehow he thinks that would bring them prosperity and we know that is not true.

The board of directors actually had an opportunity to step forward and say, "We're going to work with the government. We realize you've had a long-time promise, a long-time commitment to bring marketing freedom to western Canadian farmers. We understand that you're going to do that and so we're going to join with you. We're going to stand alongside you so that western Canadian farmers can get the best deal out of these changes that they possibly can".

What did they do? Instead they took the position and said, "We're going to fight at every turn to stop this. We're going to make sure that it doesn't go ahead".

They went so far as to come down here to meet with the opposition and say them, "We want you to disrupt this bill permanently. We want you to drag this out so that by the time the government is able to implement, it destroys the markets for western Canadian farmers".

What kind of responsibility is that? These are folks who were supposed to be marketing western Canadian grain. However, they come down here and tell my colleague from Winnipeg Centre that he should be trying to disrupt things for as long as possible, so that when I go to deliver my grain, and the farmers who are so much a part of what we are doing here today go to deliver their grain, the markets would be destroyed for them. We do not need that. This is why we have made the changes that we are making in the act.

We are going to bring forward a voluntary Canadian Wheat Board. We are going to set it up so that it has the opportunity to be successful for farmers. It is going to have government backing in terms of its payments and borrowing. We believe that other companies are going to come to the board and say, "This looks like a very useful way for us to participate with you in the pooling of grain".

We believe that passage of the bill would give farmers the certainty they need to plan their businesses for the coming year. We need this passed quickly so that beginning in January they can do that.

This bill would give customers here at home and around the world the assurance that they can continue to count on a supply of high quality Canadian wheat and barley. The legislation delivers on our long-time commitment to western Canadian farmers to give them the marketing freedom that they deserve.

I encourage members opposite to join with us to ensure the swift passage of the legislation both here in the House and in the Senate, so that we can give western Canadian farmers the freedom and stability that they so richly deserve.

• (1225)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the most charitable statement we could make about the government's ideological crusade to abolish the Canadian Wheat Board is that it is one of these issues where reasonable people can reasonably disagree on what the best options are for prairie farmers to market their grain. I am perfectly willing to have this debate on that level. However, it is almost impossible to have a reasonable debate when the other side will not conduct itself based on reason, logic, impact studies, empirical evidence and economics. It seems to be solely driven by the personal anecdotal frustrations of the parliamentary secretary himself.

When we ask for the cost benefit analysis and the business case for abolishing the Canadian Wheat Board, there has been absolutely nothing tabled anywhere, within or outside of the House of Commons. The Conservatives simply say anecdotally that when they go back to their neighbourhoods and talk to their immediate neighbours, they are all for getting rid of the Wheat Board. That is not scientific.

We were promised a vote, a plebiscite, of all prairie producers. We would be perfectly happy to be bound by such a plebiscite.

I ask the parliamentary secretary, is the only research document he has that outdated one done for the province of Alberta a number of years ago? We have the empirical evidence that the Wheat Board gets the best possible price for prairie farmers for their grain. Where is the evidence to the contrary? Where is the business case for abolishing the Wheat Board?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no empirical evidence at all that the Wheat Board gets anything other than to pool our grain right now.

Government Orders

We believe that farmers need freedom. That is what I have promised them throughout my whole political career. That is what has been promised by so many members on this side of the House because it is critical to us. We believe that people should be able to make their own choices.

There are a couple of reasons why. One has to do with how the Wheat Board has spent the farmers' money over the last few years. Last year it held an election. I did not hear the member bring that up at any point and criticize it. Within the middle of the election campaign it refused, denied permission to the people who were running, to tell the farmers that it had spent somewhere between \$60 million and \$100 million on two ships.

This entity, that was supposed to be trading my grain and the grain of farmers across western Canada on its own, decided that it needed to spend somewhere around \$100 million to go into the shipping business, which it was not trained nor set up to do. However, without consulting farmers, it decided it needed to do that.

I can provide other examples. For instance, there was the advertising campaign in the last few weeks. Maybe I will get to answer that in the next question, but it spent millions of dollars of farmers' money without talking to farmers about that.

● (1230)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am actually shocked that a member who took an oath of office as parliamentary secretary to the Canadian Wheat Board would try and rewrite history today by only talking about the Wheat Board from the years 1943 to the 1990s. What he failed to talk about was the changes which occurred in 1997 and 1998 wherein it became a farmer controlled board with elected farmer directors who were elected in 10 districts. Eight out of those ten directors are pro board, including the Wheat Board director from that member's own riding.

In the following 10 years, the Wheat Board provided all kinds of options in terms of marketing, including more options than the open market will allow farmers today. What they were assured in that legislation is that they would be given a vote. They were assured through legislation that they would be given a vote on the future of the Canadian Wheat Board and whether grain would be added or taken away. The government has denied them that voice and that vote.

Setting aside the dishonesty of the parliamentary secretary on the history of the board, I have one question.

An hon. member: That is unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. I would remind all hon. members to refrain from using unparliamentary language when referring to their colleagues.

The hon. member for Malpeque's question please.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the movement of grain is 900 miles in Canada from tidewater position. Looking at the future under this new government controlled board, I ask the parliamentary secretary, what arrangements have been made for the transportation and collection systems of the grain across the Prairies to ensure that the quality and variety of grain are moved off the Prairies, from the farms through the grain elevator system, on the main line and into

the hold of a ship, in whatever port it may be in at the time, so that farmers do not pay demurrage?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I have heard the member's rhetoric and one thing that really disappoints me is that he seems to think that somehow the quality and variety of western Canadian grain is due to the Canadian Wheat Board. We all know that it is due to the good efforts of Canadian farmers. It is not due to the Wheat Board. The Wheat Board merely handles it for farmers and farmers have been forced to deal with it. It is the farmers who grow the grains. It is the farmers who have had the highest quality grain produced around the world, and it is farmers who will continue to do that.

I want to address the beginning of his question before he got around to his insults. In 1990 I do not remember the Liberals coming to me and asking about changing the Canadian Wheat Board legislation. I do not remember them continuing to make it mandatory and coercive because they did not talk to me about that. They just made the changes they wanted to put in place. They never asked farmers what they would like. If they were to have asked then, I would have given the same answer so many of the other people who are here today would have given, which is that we wanted real choice and freedom. If they were to have granted it then, perhaps things would be different now, but we need to move ahead and give western Canadian farmers the freedom they deserve.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if these so-called free enterprises and people who came to Ottawa witnessing this really understand the impact of what is going on.

As a follow up to what my colleague from Winnipeg Centre said, there have been no impact studies or economic analyses on what is going on. Have Conservatives looked at the Australian experience? Three years after Australia deregulated its wheat board and split the coalition, farm groups say the new system is proving to be dangerous and a freakish place that has already brought about one co-op that has become unstuck. The quality now is fragmented. World markets cannot be assured of quality because this so-called deregulated board cannot function and does not have the clout it had before. If we look at it, 23% of the market share of this voluntary board in Australia collapsed without the single desk.

Has a study been done to assure us that these companies are going to pay the premium price that farmers are getting now, and that with around \$500 million in revenue brought to farmers, it is not going to go into the pockets of some of the board of directors of Cargill or some of these other companies?

● (1235)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, so far the NDP has called western Canadian farmers stooges, goons and so-called entrepreneurs. I am sure the list of insults will go on through the afternoon, which perhaps is why it has been so effective in western Canada.

Government Orders

We have studies. We have studies galore that talk about the advantages of the free market and allowing people to make choice, and New Democrats know that. Perhaps they have not looked at them. The discussion has gone on for decades. We know that farmers are going to benefit from this.

It is interesting that the New Democrats mention Australia. There are a couple of things they never mention. They never mention oil for food. They never mention the fact that the board is broken up there because people are engaged in illegal activity. They also do not mention that since the board is gone in Australia, the amount of wheat acreage has gone up. I can say the same for Ontario. People are focusing on growing grain because they can.

The NDP needs to understand that Australia has doubled its credit to exporters and increased its customer base. It is doing a very good job competing. We need those same opportunities so that our farmers can compete.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will not pretend to be someone I am not. I am from the riding of Peterborough, which is not under Wheat Board jurisdiction. I am not from the city of Winnipeg or Guelph, or Prince Edward Island. I am a person, though, who grew up on a farm and knows about growing crops, harvesting crops, having the crops come off the auger of the combine, and watching the fruit of one's labour. I cannot imagine being in a country today, Canada, where I would not have full say over my product. That is what this party is standing for. We have overwhelmingly elected all of the members from the Wheat Board jurisdiction.

Could the member tell me if he has spoken to farmers in his riding who believe the grain is, in fact, theirs and that they should have jurisdiction over it, not the Wheat Board?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, this is a remarkable question because in western Canada right now the grain does not belong to the farmers. They cannot do what they want with it. In the spring, farmers spend hundreds of thousands of dollars. This spring they were out in the mud, trying to get a crop in and growing. They spent money on fertilizer and spray, and spent the summer bringing the crop in. In the fall, they spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on machinery to try to handle the crop and then they harvest it. They brought in the crop this fall, which was a great fall in most places, and put it in their bins, just to be told that it is not their grain.

We want to change that, so western Canadian farmers know that when they put the grain in their bins, it is their grain, and they are going to be able to do what they want with it. They look forward to that opportunity and we look forward to giving it to them. That is why we need to pass this bill as quickly as possible.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-18 at third reading.

I will simply restate what I said in my comments to the parliamentary secretary. This is one of those debates in the House of Commons where reasonable people can reasonably disagree. There are two sides to this debate. When the issue was put to a vote of prairie farmers, the result was split. Some say that it was 60:40, some say that it was 40:60 and some say that, if the right information had

been distributed to them so they could have the legitimate facts, the vote would have been higher.

Mr. David Anderson: Now he's taking Elizabeth's position.

Mr. Pat Martin: I do not want to be heckled by the parliamentary secretary through my whole speech, Mr. Speaker. If I have to put up with that guy for my 20 minutes, I hope there will be some intervention from the Chair.

In the absence of any documentary evidence or business case from the parliamentary secretary, all the Conservatives have left are their dilatory actions to ram the bill through the House of Commons without even the courtesy or the respect for Parliament to give it the attention and the debate that it deserves.

Anybody watching this debate should know that this monumental change to the economy of the prairie region has been handled in a cavalier fashion and rammed through at every stage of debate. The parliamentary secretary tried to give us a little history lesson about the background of the Wheat Board. The history of the Conservatives' treatment of this bill is a story of deceit, misinformation, dirty tricks, treachery and now of denying ordinary parliamentary procedure and respect for democracy. I will itemize and defend everything that I have just said.

When the Conservatives were first elected in their minority government, they began to make unilateral changes to the Wheat Board. The courts ruled them out of order and indicated that they could not do it. They were frustrated. They imposed a gag order on the Wheat Board, something that is unworthy of any western democracy and more in keeping with a tin pot dictator in a banana republic. The Conservatives imposed a legislative edict, a gag order, on the directors of the Wheat Board. They were not allowed to say anything in defence of the Wheat Board's operations.

At the same time, they carpet bombed the prairie region with taxpayer funded propaganda containing untruths and half-truths or, at best, to be generous, anecdotal information about spot prices that occurred somewhere in Montana that the parliamentary secretary could not get his trucks to. Twenty million tonnes of wheat cannot be moved to foreign markets based on anecdotal spot pricing somewhere in Montana. That is why the Canadian Wheat Board is one of the largest and most successful grain marketing companies in the world.

It is reckless and irresponsible for the government to unilaterally dismantle this great Canadian institution without even having the respect and the courtesy to table a business case that it knows for a fact that farmers would be better off without. That is all we are asking for, that and the vote that the minister promised prairie farmers.

Government Orders

I have had many calls from farmers in all three of the main Wheat Board provinces. I have had none from B.C., frankly. These farmers told me that they voted Conservative, for whatever reason, but that they voted that way with the confidence that they would still get a vote on the future of the Wheat Board. They might have voted Conservative but they were pro-Wheat Board. The parliamentary secretary cannot deny that there is a significant number of farmers in that situation. The May 2 general election was not a referendum on the future of the Canadian Wheat Board. It was a general election on any number of other issues.

The government then gerrymandered the voters' list. This also is unworthy of any progressive western democracy.

The government provided misinformation, a falsehood, that the minister would allow a vote. On April 11, in the middle of the general election, the minister is on record as saying that he would allow a vote. He assured farmers that they would get a vote on the future of the Wheat Board. He told them that they could safely vote Conservative because he respected democracy and he would consult with farmers on the future of the Wheat Board. That never came about. I do not know what to call it without being ruled unparliamentary, but when someone deliberately tells someone else a falsehood we all know what that is called.

• (1240)

Perhaps the greatest insult of all is the fact that the Conservatives are ramming the bill through with what we call time allocation or closure. That means we will not be able to give this issue the oversight, the scrutiny and the due diligence that is our very job as opposition members of Parliament. We are supposed to, again, in a spirit of generosity where reasonable people can reasonably disagree, both sides, put forward our arguments and defend our arguments with robust and thorough examination and, hopefully, the best ideas gravitate to the surface and that becomes law.

In the absence of any of that information, we cannot do that job. We were hoping, at the committee stage, perhaps, we would be able to call witnesses, we would be able to call prairie farmers who are for the Wheat Board, we would be able to call prairie farmers who are against it, we would be able to call economists and we would be able to call experts in grain marketing around the world. We were denied any of that. They did not send it to a committee. They created a special legislative committee to study the bill in which we are not allowed to call any witnesses other than technical advisors to clauses in the language.

We would not have been allowed to call any one of the anti-Wheat Board farmers who are witnessing this debate in the galleries today. I wanted to hear their point of view. I wanted to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I would like to remind all hon. members not to refer to people who are or who are not in the House and, in the same way, who are or who are not in the gallery.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

• (1245)

Mr. Pat Martin: A valid point, Mr. Speaker. I will not do that.

We should have been able to hear from pro-Wheat Board and anti-Wheat Board farmers but we heard from none of them. We had two evening meetings of four hours each. The witnesses were mostly technical witnesses to explain what effect clause (a), subclause (b) would have in terms of the administration of the Wheat Board. However, there was no broad consultation.

Surely it is reckless and irresponsible to turn the Prairie economy upside down on its head without at least that basic level of due diligence. It is crazy. It is the act of an ideological zealot, frankly, to ignore all of those things that we should be able to do. It is infuriating to me.

The parliamentary secretary tried to walk us through some kind of a history lesson of the Wheat Board. I have a chart here, a convenient graphic illustration that we made up. I know I cannot show that to the House as a prop. However, in those periods of time when there was no single desk, the price of wheat went down. In those periods of time when there was a single desk, the price of wheat went up. During the time when it was a voluntary dual marketing Wheat Board, the price of grains went down. The time when it was a single desk, the price of grains went up.

That is the accurate history of the experience of the Wheat Board from the 1920s. It is disingenuous to try to imply otherwise. Those are the kinds of facts that we could have benefited from in our deliberation of this bill. We are just trying to do our job here but those guys are so overwhelmed by their passion to destroy the Wheat Board, by their irrational hatred of the Wheat Board, that reason, logic, economics, science, due diligence, oversight and scrutiny are foreign concepts to the Conservatives. They rely on the anecdotal information of their personal experience.

I can sympathize with the parliamentary secretary. If he had some disagreement with the Wheat Board, maybe he should get involved in the Wheat Board elections and change the Wheat Board from within or allow a plebiscite vote, a fair question and a fairly conducted vote. If that vote were 50% plus 1 for abolishing the Wheat Board, members would not hear a word from us. There would not be this push-back because we would have consulted farmers, they would have spoken and their voices would have been heard and respected.

However, the government will not put it to a vote because, I believe, it is afraid of the outcome. Whenever we do consult farmers, it is split, admittedly, but the majority has ruled and that has been the magic of the Wheat Board. Its universality has been its greatest strength and its success.

Having a voluntary Wheat Board, we know from actual experience, is chimera. It is a myth. It is some notion that the government is trying to project on its way to the full abolition of the Wheat Board.

Government Orders

It is funny how the Americans recognize the advantage of having the Wheat Board. In fact, there is evidence of that. I try to back up my comments with actual documentation as opposed to the ideological notions, the whims, the flights of fancy of the minister and his parliamentary secretary. The Americans recognize that it is a huge advantage to Canadian farmers, so much so that they have filed 13 separate complaints to the GATT and the WTO claiming that the Wheat Board is such an advantage to prairie farmers that it constitutes an unfair trade practice and should be abolished as such. They lost 13 times because the WTO ruled that there was nothing unfair about producers acting collectively to get the best price for their product and to reduce their transportation costs and to share the risk by pooling the risk, sharing the profits and operating on a non-profit basis.

That might be contrary to the best interests of Cargill and the for-profit grain companies, but it is certainly not a violation of any kind of trade agreements that Canada has stipulated to. It is just good business sense. They realize that in unity there is strength, that collectively they could get the best prices and reduce their costs. One of the main complaints that the parliamentary secretary has is that they bought some ships. They bought some ships in order to provide the best possible transportation costs to their clients, the prairie producer. It is a non-profit operation.

● (1250)

I heard one of the members, I cannot remember his name, the long gun registry guy, calling it “lifting the iron curtain from grain marketing”, as if it were communism. Perhaps we have gotten to the root of the Conservatives' hatred here, their ideological zeal against the Wheat Board. They view it as communism for prairie farmers to act collectively in their own best interests. Therefore, they think it must be stamped out. That is how goofy it is. They are laughing about it now, but we know behind closed doors that is how they view it.

In fact, the experience has been one of the largest and most successful grain marketing companies in the world, the guarantor of the best premium quality grains in the world. The Wheat Board has given Canada a branding and reputation that add value to our product. I guarantee, and this is one of the things that I can also back up with documentation, we will lose that top quality branding if American grain companies start mixing Canadian product with batches of American product in their marketing operations. We will not have the oversight of the grain commission. We will not have the intensity of the research that comes from the grain institute, that complements the grain production, that gives the Wheat Board the number one premium brand in the world and our reputation.

The grain industry is vital to the area that I represent, the prairie region. Grain is our oil, the backbone of our economy. This is going to constitute a transfer of wealth, the likes of which we have not seen since the big pharma drug giveaway by the Liberal government when it gave 20-year patent guarantees to pharmaceutical companies.

This is a transfer of wealth of a magnitude that we have never seen on the Prairies. Hundreds of millions of dollars will be taken out of the pockets of prairie producers and will be put into the pockets of the shareholders of the big grain companies that have been salivating

over this market share ever since the Wheat Board was created. They never gave up. Just like the enemies of public health care have never really given up, they have just been waiting in the wings for somebody to come along and finally do their dirty work for them so that they can get that market share back.

Just this weekend, I drove down Wellington Crescent, the richest street in Winnipeg, and was reflecting on this change that is going to take place. Every mansion on Wellington Crescent was built by the robber barons in the 1900s, 1910s and 1920s, who gouged prairie farmers so mercilessly that they were forced into some collective action to protect themselves.

Those robber barons put on a nice disguise now. Villainy wears many masks, but none so treacherous as the mask of virtue. We will hear virtuous statements from the agents of treachery in this debate. We will hear the parliamentary secretary. Let us guess what his next career will be. He will be a member of the board of directors of Cargill. He probably has job offers already with any kind of luck. If he is smart, he is negotiating that on the phone as we speak. “Guess what? The day has arrived. We finally stamped out the Wheat Board”. Villainy and treachery. J'accuse.

We already know the experience of Brian Mulroney. Where did he end up? On the board of directors of one of the big three. Guess what his billings were from 2009 to 2011. His billings as a director of Archer Daniels Midland were \$650,000. Normally, a member of a board of directors is not compensated \$650,000 just for attending one meeting a year to vote on the compensation of fellow directors. He is delivering something. He is delivering the Canadian Wheat Board back into the hands of the robber barons who have been drooling over this market share ever since this important change took place.

It is a sad day for democracy when such an important and transformative change to the rural prairie economy takes place without even the scrutiny, the oversight and the due diligence of Canadian members of Parliament.

● (1255)

This is the tragedy here. Perhaps we should be sounding the alarm.

I was accused of using an obscenity on Twitter recently, while I sat here lamenting closure. The real obscenity is the calculated abuse of Parliament, disrespect for Parliament and even disrespect for the courtesy of presenting a reasonable case. The real obscenity is not asking a single farmer, or ordinary producer, to come as a witness before a parliamentary committee to speak for or against a bill that would change things forever. And let us have no illusions about this, this change is irreversible. We will not get a Canadian wheat board back if we do not like, in the next five years, what is going to happen to this one. Some people will be happy about that; maybe those who are lucky enough to have a large acreage right on the American border and who could drive their product down to some mill in Montana.

Government Orders

However, let us deal with some of the myths that the parliamentary secretary and his minister, in some free market flight of fancy, are sharing. They say that as soon as they get rid of the Wheat Board, all kinds of value added and secondary industry will spring out of the ground like mushrooms all over the prairie region.

First, there is the untruth associated with this. In the last 10 years, milling capacity has increased 50% in the rural prairie region and four new institutions have popped up for value added. It is not as though it is impossible.

At the same time, south of the border, the milling capacity increased 9% and there were no new installations.

They would have us believe that it will be nirvana, that for a nominal fee they could reach nirvana tonight, that old myth. They are trying to promise all kinds of changes that would occur overnight because there is one guy who is waiting to open his doors as soon as they get rid of the Wheat Board. Do members know why? Because he would be able to buy grain cheaper. The Wheat Board did not offer a premium to producers, because their mandate was to get the best price for farmers. The only way to get grain cheaper is to give farmers less for it. Is that in the best interests of the prairie producers?

That is only one of the inconsistencies in their argument. If we were given the luxury of time at a parliamentary committee, we could study many others. I guarantee that their own members would have serious questions about why they are ramming through this ideological crusade in the absence of reason, logic, a business case, or even an economic case of why it might be a good idea.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the hon. member's speech. Before I get to my question, I would encourage the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board to consider playing the part of Tom Selleck in the next *Magnum, P.I.*. That is one heck of a moustache this November.

With regard to the member's comments regarding the Wheat Board, as I indicated earlier, I come from a farming background, in the great province of Ontario. We do not have a wheat board that ensures quality, but people line up to buy it because they know the quality of Ontario produce and grains and oilseeds is outstanding.

The member can talk of anecdotal evidence that he might have in support of the Wheat Board. It is not a market. Farmers there are not selling to the market. They are forced to provide their produce to the Wheat Board. They do not have an opportunity to go to the market with their grain. Nobody in any other part of the country, British Columbia, Ontario or Quebec, wants a wheat board. That is because they see the opportunity in the market.

Ontario, for example, has the second largest food processing industry in North America. I do not know if the member knows that. That is, in part, due to the fact that we have a free market in grains and oilseeds. Quaker Oats in Peterborough, for example, buys oats from local farmers. It has been a great partnership for the people of my riding.

I wonder why the member would close off opportunities to prairie farmers that farmers in Ontario, Quebec and elsewhere have.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, that is a reasonable question. In fact, all we are asking for is that prairie farmers get the same courtesy and the same rights as Ontario farmers, in that we allow them to vote. When Ontario farmers chose not to use a single desk any more, it was the result of a democratic vote of all producers and by a small majority. They decided they did not want to use the single desk. Not a word was heard from us, not a word from the NDP, or CCF in those days. They made their choice democratically and we respected their choice.

The contradiction here is that the farmers in the western region, the Wheat Board region, were promised a vote and they have been denied that vote. We have no other avenue of recourse than to try to get our business case forward in Parliament.

• (1300)

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is about to tear away the sales and marketing department of 60,000 to 70,000 wheat farmers out west. *The Wall Street Journal* is heralding this legislation because it is going to mean profits for shareholders of Viterra and Cargill, profits from the pockets of farmers. The Alliance Grain Traders is opening up a pasta plant out west because, in its own words, it is going to pay farmers less for their grain. *The Economist* magazine has already talked about how the failure of small farms and small town economies out west will change the face of western culture. If we did not know any of these things, then we would think this was a good idea.

Would the member for Winnipeg Centre tell us about the raising of the cap from \$60 million to \$200 million just last week, which I think is to fund the folly of the Minister of Agriculture?

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Guelph raises two important points. First of all, one of those big grain families, the Patersons in Winnipeg, was very honest. We have all seen the Paterson grain elevators across the prairie region. When asked whether he thought getting rid of the Canadian Wheat Board was a good idea, Mr. Paterson, age 50, said, "We'll do better than we do now". His family firm has climbed to more than \$1 billion in annual revenues. He said, "Our best years were in the time before the Wheat Board and that pattern should reassert itself". At least he had the decency to admit that he had been waiting anxiously in the wings for somebody to come along and do the dirty work for him, to abolish the Wheat Board so he can get back what he thinks is rightfully his, that is, a monopoly. Not a monopoly in the best interests of farmers, but a monopoly of the grain marketing where he can dictate the price just as he used to. It will be welcome back to the 1920s.

Government Orders

My colleague's second question was about the reserve fund. It was arbitrarily raised from \$60 million to \$100 million as the Wheat Board had requested. The government then ordered the contingency fund last week to be raised to \$200 million. That means prairie farmers are being forced now to use their money to pay for the dissolution and restructuring of the Canadian Wheat Board instead of the government. If government is causing this problem, it should be paying the restructuring and closing costs which are estimated at \$500 million as well.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Winnipeg Centre for his tireless work on behalf of western Canadian farmers.

I had the pleasure of attending the convention of the National Farmers Union this weekend in London, Ontario. This group has also worked tirelessly on behalf of farmers, and is made up of farmers at the grassroots level. Not one farmer, young or old, said that he or she was were in agreement with this current legislation. The group that represents grassroots farmers is saying they should have had a vote.

At the convention I was given a disturbing article to which the hon. members for Guelph and Winnipeg Centre just referred. The article in the *Leader-Post* of November 26 says: "The wind-up costs are estimated to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, including liability costs of breaking or renegotiating contracts and obligations, pension and severance payments, and other asset purchases".

The author of the article is saying that farmers' money is going to cover these costs. Would my colleague comment on the fact that as estimated by the current chair of the Wheat Board, Allen Oberg, the cost will be somewhere from \$200 million to \$400 million? Does the member feel this is justified?

• (1305)

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, no, I do not believe this is justified. In fact, I feel so strongly about this that I move that the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word "That" and substituting the following: That Bill C-18, An Act to reorganize the Canadian Wheat Board and to make consequential and related amendments to certain Acts be not now read a third time, but that it be read a third time this day six months hence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I must bring to the attention of the hon. member and the House that it is not admissible to move an amendment during the period for questions and comments. If an amendment were to have been moved, it ought to have been done during the member's presentation.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a good thing the member opposite is entertaining because he is never accurate. We have just seen an example of that again.

I want to talk about the money that is being spent. The member for Guelph mentioned that. I did not get a chance to get to this in my speech.

On the plebiscite that the Wheat Board set up in the summer, we know that it spent over \$300,000 of farmers' money trying to promote one side of the discussion. The Wheat Board was clearly spending farmers' money for a particular political purpose. We know that it spent somewhere between \$60 million and \$100 million on two ships that it did not tell farmers it was buying. The Wheat Board did not let farmers know until after the agreement had been made. In fact, it kept completely silent throughout an election campaign cycle because it did not want farmers to know. It has spent, I think, several million dollars in the last month.

I want to talk about the advertising campaign. There has been a couple of million dollars spent in eastern Canada. Even the member opposite has to admit that is irresponsible.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, the government arbitrarily ordered the Wheat Board to raise its contingency fund from \$100 million to \$200 million. The government itself is using farmers' money to pay for the closing down of and contingencies associated with a change in the Wheat Board's structure. The Conservatives have off-loaded the burden of these closing costs onto prairie producers. The prairie farmers associated with this should be furious.

It is another example of the unfairness, the heavy-handed tactics and unfair interference of the state coming down on the rights of farmers to act collectively in their own best interests. The Conservatives are letting their ideology get in the way of the best interests of farmers to get the greatest rate of return for their product. The government is handing them over to be at the mercy of a few very powerful grain buyers who will be able to dictate the price. Five years hence, unfortunately, it will all be too late.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to comment on the parliamentary secretary's statement about spending by the board. The board has a fiduciary duty to protect the board and the interests of wheat farmers. That is why that money was spent.

I am pleased to rise today in the debate at third reading on the Conservative government's bill that would effectively kill the Canadian Wheat Board. It is an honour because I truly believe that when putting forward legislation such as this, legislation that would not only touch the lives and livelihoods of farmers across the western provinces but would profoundly change the face of agriculture in this country, there should be fulsome debate. Sadly, the Conservative government decided in May that it would not listen to any voices but its own for the next four years. Not only do Canadian farmers who voted to keep the Canadian Wheat Board deserve better, so do Canadians across this country who understand that their bread does not come from the bakery or the grocery store but from the hard work and dedication of Canadian farmers.

Government Orders

Having walked away from the election with only 39% of the vote, meaning that 61% of Canadians do not support the government's measures, the Conservatives have treated their majority as an excuse to walk all over farmers who do not share their ideological beliefs. I remind the House that according to the existing Canadian Wheat Board Act, an affirmative vote of wheat farmers is required under section 47.1 before a change as significant as this is made.

Regardless of pre-election promises by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food in Minnedosa in March of this year to have a farmer vote and not act arbitrarily, the government shut out the voices of farmers by refusing to hold a farmers vote and smearing anyone who dared stand up to its ideological steamroller. In August the Canadian Wheat Board held its own farmers vote, wherein a majority of western Canadian grain producers voted to maintain the single desk under the Canadian Wheat Board. What did the government do? It is no surprise. It smeared the results. How can a government maintain that Canadian farmers know best on the one hand while refusing to actually listen to a single one?

The Conservatives limited debate, giving the House only three shortened days to speak to a bill that would fundamentally alter the face of farming and would change rural life in the prairie provinces forever. Then the government referred the bill to a special legislative committee, not the regular agriculture committee, limiting its review to only the technical elements of the bill, not to the impact on small farms and the effect that attacking the family farm will have on small town rural economies.

The legislative committee did not even travel out west to hear from farmers, despite my seeking consent in the House to do so. To add insult to injury, the committee was restricted to only two evenings of hearing witnesses, only two nights for people to testify to the detrimental impact this bill will have before the committee was restricted to one short night of clause-by-clause examination of the bill, refusing all amendments designed to put control of even the new Canadian Wheat Board into the hands of farmers. Fearing the truth, Conservatives held farmers back and silenced tens of thousands of farmers' voices, pretending to Canadians that no opposition to this bill ever existed, an all too familiar deception that characterizes the government.

What the Conservative government does not want to hear is that farmers are profoundly concerned about the clout and strength they will lose once they are no longer able to negotiate, sell or market their wheat, durum and barley through the single desk. Where is the Prime Minister who said only hours after winning his majority that he would govern for all Canadians? I do not recall him explaining that there is an exception for western grain farmers who tried to speak through their Conservative MPs but could not even get a return call or email response on the issue. They were completely ignored. What of the farmers in Ottawa right now who cannot get a meeting with Conservative senators? It is shameful.

Post-election democracy no longer exists with the government. This is more severe than the back and forth of debate in the House. It is much more than every question that the minister or his parliamentary secretary have deflected. These are farmers who have worked their whole lives on their farms, who support the Canadian Wheat Board, who are being ignored because the government does not want to hear what they have to say.

● (1310)

With the removal of the single desk, a great piece of armour is being removed from the farmers' arsenal. Vital infrastructure that links the marketing, sales and transportation needs of western Canadian farmers is being destroyed. In the absence of any meaningful action on the rail service review for nine months now, farmers are concerned that they will no longer have the hammer that they need to deal with the overwhelming strength and appetite for profit of big grain companies and the railway.

Western grain farmers have shared their tragic stories of the abuse they suffer at the hands of the railways. The railway companies have such a callous disregard for farmers that they will often send railway cars with holes in them without any consideration for what grain will be lost along the way. Farmers individually are up against a behemoth where their collective clout enables them recourse in the face of such poor treatment. That clout will now be gone.

Many farmers have approached me because our Competition Act is not nearly effective enough in dealing with anti-competitive behaviour. In this infrastructural vacuum, farmers will be left to struggle and die. Not only will farmers be left to fend for themselves, but even the farmers who stay with an interim wheat board will lose their voice in the organization.

This bill does not allow for any elected directors upon the coming into effect of the new law, and leaves five government-appointed directors. These directors, unaccountable to grain producers, are no more than puppets of the minister with the new sweeping powers set in place by the bill that require the board to be operated by whom? The Prime Minister's office.

My colleague on the government side, the member for Westlock—St. Paul, once wrote the following to his constituents:

Canada is a democracy and one of the underlying tenets of a democracy is that fact that citizens vote to elect their representatives, be it an MP, a mayor or a Director of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Government Orders

I am saddened that my friend has abandoned his commitment to democratic institutions. There is a very important truth in that statement. Members on both sides of this House have argued that farmers know what is in their own best interests. Therefore, when the western Canadian farmers elect their directors to the Wheat Board and 80% of the directors elected consistently support the single desk, one can only assume that the democratic process has been respected and the wishes of the electorate have been satisfied.

Many of the same farmers who may have helped to elect my friend the member for Westlock—St. Paul or any number of members opposite from the government party also voted to elect representatives to their Wheat Board and support the single desk.

A number of members opposite have questioned my position on behalf of prairie wheat and barley farmers in the past because I am from Ontario. Well, I will say to those members that people from Ontario and everywhere else in this country know that their food comes from farmers and not the grocery store. The Conservatives have made the false link between the single desk and western Canadian provinces and the Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board. I will clear up some of the errors in their argument before they rise during the period for questions and comments.

We are entirely committed to giving western Canadian farmers the same choice as Ontario farmers. In the late 1990s, the Ontario farmer-elected board of the single desk began a transition, supported by producers, to move to an open market. Farmer-elected directors supported by Ontario farmers made this choice, not a government talking down to producers, the majority of whom voted to sustain the single desk.

There is no question that Canada produces the best grain in the world. However, there are different grades of grain, and the members opposite need to keep that in mind when they are considering this bill. Ontario production is one-tenth that of the western provinces, and produces a soft wheat, one used primarily for pastry, cookies and doughnuts. The western provinces' hard red spring wheat is used in making bread, and their durum for making pasta. Ontario mills rely on prairie wheat for flour.

Most of Ontario's wheat is sold within Canada or the northern United States, while the majority of western wheat is shipped around the world. The transportation costs for western wheat and its markets are not at all comparable, nor is the clout required to sustain the western wheat industry.

• (1315)

What is the bottom line? If the members opposite would like to continue making the comparison between Ontario and the western provinces, they should first allow western farmers a vote to determine their own future.

Any way we look at it, the will of western Canadian wheat, durum and barley farmers is being ignored by the government. A majority of farmers elected the farmer directors. A majority of farmers supported maintaining the single desk and a majority of farmers are furious that their Conservative MPs are muzzled by the Prime Minister's office, will not listen to their wishes or their needs and are now endangering their livelihoods.

When asked about why there will be no farmer-elected directors on the interim Canada wheat board, members at committee were informed that it was necessary for such oversight given the expenditure of taxpayer money. This, of course, raises a new concern. How much taxpayer money will be spent killing the Canadian Wheat Board? With the single desk, the Canadian Wheat Board is an organization with annual revenue of \$5 billion to \$8 billion, which generates hundreds of millions of dollars a year for all farmers.

Presently, there is no cost to the Canadian taxpayers and yet the government has not released a single estimate of how much this is anticipated to cost, nor has it released a business plan for a new Canadian wheat board. What business starts without a business plan? I thought perhaps the government was considering funding its failed enterprise on the back of farmers.

A week and a half ago, it was discovered that the government had raised the cap on the Canadian Wheat Board's contingency fund, originally developed to allow the Canadian Wheat Board to pursue more innovative marketing, as well as to gradually build a buffer to protect farmers. The reserve was capped at \$60 million for the last 13 years. Everything above that went to farmers through the wheat pool of funds. At the 11th hour, just in the past week or so, the Conservative government suddenly raised the cap to \$200 million. I could only imagine that even the farmers who support the government's position are furious to learn that their hard-earned money now provides for a Conservative government's slush fund, a fund designed to pay for the minister's new farming folly and the further liabilities of dismantling the Wheat Board.

Farmers could use this money. With the fragile state of the world economy, the Canada Wheat Board is more important than ever to grain exporting prairie provinces. This money is the financial backstop for their clout. These farmers have heard the prognostications of big grain companies like Viterra, Cargill, Richardson and even Bunge, most of whom have seen share prices spike with the news that the Conservatives would be killing the Wheat Board. Even today, Cargill announced that it will create their own wheat pool for farmers. What chance does an interim Canada wheat board have to survive? Almost nil.

Just weeks ago, the *Wall Street Journal* welcomed the demise of the Wheat Board, noting that under the present single desk system, "More money goes back to farmers than under an open market system". It went on to say, "Grain handlers such as Cargill Inc., Viterra Inc., and Bunge Limited, could see their roles and returns in Canadian grain markets grow".

Where will this growth come from? It will come from profit that would have been in the pockets of western farmers and small town economies, thanks to the Canadian Wheat Board. Do we need more proof? Alliance Grain Traders are just now opening a pasta processing plant in Regina, one that would not have been feasible before, unless it knew it could get the lowest possible price for farmers' wheat and durum, noting that the best way now to combat their market erosion is, "by negotiating lower prices from growers".

Government Orders

Once the protection of the single desk is gone, these businesses will begin to divide and conquer farmers, negotiating them down to the lowest possible price, making farmers price takers instead of price setters, until inevitably, as was the case in Australia, there is only one large agribusiness left.

Western Canadian farmers on both sides of this debate should take a much closer look at the Australian model. Its example leaves so many questions unanswered but has demonstrated that deregulation has led to major agribusiness controlling the logistic chain, leaving farmers out in the cold.

Jock Munro, a grain farmer from New South Wales, Australia, in an article in *Grain Matters*, lamented:

We estimate we have lost \$4 billion as growers since the wheat industry was deregulated three years ago.

The math just does not add up, unless the government is deliberately ensuring that Canadian farmers are the losers at the end of this deal.

● (1320)

Not contained in the bill is any contingency for 10 to 15 years down the road. We know that small farms and small town economies will now be in danger of failure, even *The Economist* magazine agrees. In an editorial at the outset of this debate it wrote:

Smaller producers, faced with mounting marketing costs, will inevitably have to sell their farms to bigger rivals or agribusiness companies...devastating small prairie towns, whose economies depend on individual farmers with disposable income.

We already know that the government will not intervene unless it is to pull the strings of the board of directors, so farmers are left at the mercy of the grain and rail companies. We know that any extra money that might have been returned to farmers this year is being held hostage by the minister and his government.

What of food sovereignty? I am concerned, as are farmers across the western provinces, and Canadians across this country, that once small farms start failing on the Conservative government watch they will be bought up by large agribusiness or even foreign countries that are more concerned with their own profits and internal interests than our food sovereignty.

Recently, the government has made a number of moves that are less than encouraging for Canadian agricultural industries. Having bowed to most of the United States' protectionist measures, the government has now placed supply management of eggs, milk and poultry on the table to negotiate away. First it was the Wheat Board and now it is supply management.

The precedent set by killing the Canadian Wheat Board is causing a great deal of concern among supply managed farmers. Farmers remember the Prime Minister telling the members of the trans-Pacific partnership that supply management was on the table, just as clearly as they remember him telling our European partners that it was on the table, just as clearly as they remember this quote from the same man, their esteemed Prime Minister, who said, "Take for example, 'supply management', our government-sponsored price-fixing cartels". The Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food have always been clear that they favour the free market regardless of the cost to our Canadian farmers, Canada's food sovereignty and food security.

The bill is not about fairness or freedom. We have said from the very start to let farmers decide. The Conservative government, from the very start, has cut off any expression that opposes its ideological obsession with killing the single desk.

With that, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

This House declines to give third reading to Bill C-18, An Act to reorganize the Canadian Wheat Board and to make consequential and related amendments to certain acts, because members of the committee were unable to hear testimony from the primary producers affected by and concerned with the future commercialization of the Canadian Wheat Board.

● (1325)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Medicine Hat.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to part of the hon. member's speech and found it very disturbing. In fact, as I recall, he said that no western MPs responded to any phone calls, emails or letters from farmers in their ridings. That is not true at all. I responded to every phone call, email and letter from farmers. There was one fellow who was about 92, another who was 80-some-odd, another in his 70s, and many hundreds of others who supported our position on this.

I would ask the hon. member how many of his farmers actually supported his party's position.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, to comfort the hon. member somewhat, I did not use the word "no". However, I can say that I have received thousands of signatures in the form of petitions, which we have presented in this House on a daily basis. The members opposite were present when those petitions were presented.

It is important to remember that 62% of wheat farmers and 51% of barley farmers, who were forced to hold their own plebiscite, voted in favour of maintaining the single desk. Yet, I hear from so many Conservative MPs over there that they are not hearing from anybody about the need to keep the Wheat Board. What kind of nonsense is it that they would have us believe that nobody is emailing, writing or asking them to maintain the board?

While the member may have received people in his riding office or he may have responded, he is welcome to come to my office and I will give him a list of the members in his party who would not respond to their constituents on this matter.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech and for the opportunity it gives us to ask some questions and take part in the debate, given that, with the limited time available, we do not have much opportunity to have our say on the matter.

Government Orders

I wonder if my colleague from Guelph could elaborate a little more on the potential consequences. We have seen many changes in agriculture in recent years. In the member's opinion, what sort of consequences could abolishing the Canadian Wheat Board have?

• (1330)

[*English*]

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, if we look at this from 20,000 feet or from 1 foot, the sales and marketing arm of over 60,000 farmers is being torn away from them. Many farmers, many of them older, will not be able to make the transition. I have heard this from farmers who support getting rid of the Wheat Board. They have acknowledged to me that there are many farms that will fail because they will not have the resources now to step up and create their own sales and marketing department.

With the failure of those small farms, we will have small town economies, which are dependent on those incomes, dependent on being fortified by the spending of incomes in those small communities, being compromised. This is not my notion. I have read this many times in many different articles from economists, including *The Economist* magazine which predicted the failure of small town economies. Not only is the Prime Minister changing the face of Canada, he is disfiguring the face of Canada in our western provinces.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that the Prime Minister of Canada has had a very strong personal hatred for the Canadian Wheat Board long before he even became the Prime Minister of our country. I think this whole Bill C-18 to get rid of the Wheat Board has more to do with the personal opinions and feelings of members of the Conservative government. I say that because over 20,000 prairie grain farmers from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba sent a very clear message to the House of Commons, to this Prime Minister, saying that they see the value of the Canadian Wheat Board and that they do not want the government to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board. This is the message that I believe the prairie farmers sent to the Prime Minister.

Would the member agree that the vast majority of prairie grain farmers are sending that message to the Prime Minister? Why does the member believe the Prime Minister is not listening to the pleas of the prairie grain farmer today.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague from Winnipeg for the incredibly hard work he has been doing on behalf of western grain farmers. I have worked with him on this file and have been out west with him to talk to farmers. It is purely ideological. It is getting rid of any organization that resembles a collective coming together for the benefit of the many.

Fragmented, the board will lose its clout. It will lose its clout with the railways and with the large grain companies. It will lose the strength that it needs to be price setters instead of price takers.

However, in response to my friend's question, it is pure ideology. There is not one business case that has been presented to this House for the new Canada wheat board or the interim Canada wheat board. I suspect that within four years, now with the introduction by Cargill of a pooling system, this wheat board will not even exist. At whose expense? At the farmers' expense by the \$200 million that the

minister is already collecting from their pockets in order to fund his folly.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for my colleague from Guelph, but he is being incredibly misled.

My colleague talked about the marketing arm of the Wheat Board being torn away. Quite honestly, I have to wonder what he means by that. This is about giving farmers freedom, not unlike the freedom that grain farmers in Ontario have. The Wheat Board would still be represented, and they would still have the opportunity to market.

The scenario that my colleague is painting is that we are asking farmers out west to accept all of the responsibility and the liability for growing a crop, but we are telling them that they do not have the good economic sense to be able to market it. In fact, we would be giving them the opportunity to choose whether they want to market their grain through the Wheat Board or whether they want to market it on their own. To me, his comments are a slap in the face to the ability that farmers have.

Why is my colleague not seeking input from farmers in Ontario, who have freedom of choice? Why does he not ask them for their opinions on how well it works? It will work out west.

• (1335)

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of esteem for my friend from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. We work on the agriculture committee together and we have accomplished a lot.

If my colleague wants to speak of being misled, then he needs to understand how misled he has been on this democratic institution and on the rights of farmers to decide.

The farmers in Ontario decided for themselves, and farmers in our prairie provinces have the right to decide for themselves under section 47.1. However, notwithstanding farmers' pleas for a vote to be held, as is required by the legislation, the government has refused to hold one. Many petitions have come to the House indicating that farmers will live by the results of the vote, whether pro or con, yet the government has refused to hold a vote.

I am saddened that my good friend is participating in this incredible and dreadful erosion of democracy and farmers' rights.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour to get up to speak today as the member for the riding of Prince Albert. When I look at the things we would like to accomplish as a members of Parliament and what our constituents want us to accomplish, I can see that this bill is one that does both. The change to the Canadian Wheat Board is one that both I and my constituents want to see happen.

We have heard a lot of talk today about the Canadian Wheat Board and what is going on. The Liberal members would have us believe that the Canadian Wheat Board would be totally disbanded, everyone would be thrown out of work, and the Wheat Board would not exist. That is not true.

Government Orders

What is happening is that the Wheat Board is being transitioned to a functioning entity that farmers want. Farmers who want to participate in it will be able to and will have the option to participate in it; farmers who do not want to will have that option also. It is the same right and privilege that farmers right across Canada have, and farmers in the designated area will now also have the same right and privilege.

This has been a very divisive debate for the last 40 years. There have not been any new arguments brought to the table in the last three weeks or six months or year that would change a member's mind or change a constituent's or farmer's mind on where they sit on this debate. Everyone has their ideology when it comes to this debate. Everyone has their reason for believing what they believe.

It is interesting that when we look back at the history of this file, we see a report from the Canadian Wheat Board, paid for by the Canadian Wheat Board, saying that it extracts premium. Then we can also go back and see a report by the George Morris Centre saying that there is no premium. Those types of arguments have been going on and on in the Prairies for probably the last 40 years.

However, one argument that cannot be fought against is freedom. We cannot fight against the right to our property. We cannot tell people that we are going to take what is theirs and make it ours. That is improper. That is not right.

People can argue all sorts of reasons on why they want collective marketing. They can argue all sorts of reasons on why they want the CWB. Those options are there, but it is farmers' hard work that creates that crop. It is their hard work that will make that wheat and barley grow, and they should be able to receive the rewards for their hard work.

I do not want to forget to mention, Mr. Speaker, that I will be sharing my time with the member for Portage—Lisgar.

Through this last summer, the CWB knew exactly what was going on. It knew the transition was going to happen. It had all the tools in front of it to go forward and it decided not to. The board, instead of working with farmers, the government, accredited exporters, and their customers, decided to do the opposite: to become a bunch of political agents and work for the NDP and the Liberal Party. It decided to do that with farmers' money. It took farmers' money without asking and started a campaign. It was not so much for what it believed in—it is just its own ideology that it believes in—and it did not represent farmers.

The CWB could have gone out this summer and sold wheat and barley over the next four or five years, but instead it did a plebiscite. It identified voters, people who would support the CWB. Why did it not go and ask those farmers to sign up acres? Why did it not go to them to say that if they supported the single desk and the concept of pooling their product with the Canadian Wheat Board, it was still able to do that. It could actually have moved forward, taken the farmers' acres and marketed them on their behalf at pooled prices. The Canadian Wheat Board could have set up a program to do that, but it did not.

It is interesting that when I talk to different accredited exporters who have been through the House of Commons, there is concern on their side too. They are looking for an entity to work with to source

grain on the Prairies. Again, they are familiar with the Canadian Wheat Board and familiar with the staff there. The directors just had to give the staff the green light to go ahead. Did they do that? No, they engaged in a political debate. They engaged in their own self-preservation, their own ideology.

Actually, that is why they needed to be removed and a transition board needed to come forward. It was not only to protect the employees of the Canadian Wheat Board, who are good, hard-working people, but also to protect the farmers who wanted to use this chance of pooling and wanted to use this entity to market their wheat.

It is going to be interesting as we look forward to this new CWB and what it can become. There are no shackles on it. It can actually do what it wants to do. The farmers who support it can actually lead that organization to where they want it to go. If they want to handle pulses and can find a market where they can tie pulses into some wheat and barley, they can do that. If they want to handle canola, they can do that. If they want to handle oats, or wheat and barley out of Ontario or Quebec, they can do that. They have the ability to take the organization where they feel it needs to go.

● (1340)

That is something that farmers have never had with the Canadian Wheat Board. That is something that has never been represented in the way the CWB operates and runs.

Many times in the Prairies we have seen value-added entities come up. A good example was the Weyburn Inland Terminal's pasta plant. Here was a group of farmers who wanted to build a pasta plant. They got together, raised the funds and found the market for the pasta. They had everything to rock and roll and were ready to go, but the CWB stepped in and said no.

The CWB is not there for itself; it is there for farmers. That is its main goal. It is a tool to be used by farmers. However, in this situation the CWB refused to adapt their tool to allow farmers to use it properly. Instead of farmers being able to appreciate the CWB, work with the board and figure out a way around it so that the pasta plant could go forward, the CWB said no.

That has been a problem in how the CWB has operated in past history. It was never there necessarily to work for farmers, but to protect its own single desk ideology. It never worked with guys who wanted to proceed with niche markets or other opportunities. The CWB would say that would do buy-back options and would look at other options for farmers to buy back the product, but it always made it either a hurdle or impossible.

There is another interesting thing about the buy-backs. A few farmers who went through the process talked to me about it. They found their own market and did the buy-back. On the buy-back form they actually had to name who they were selling their wheat to. They would put, in good faith, the name of the company they were selling their wheat to across the line or overseas; the next week, they would get a phone call from their customers telling them that the CWB had gone in and undercut them.

Government Orders

One wonders how hard the organization was actively searching for markets for farmers' grain, or whether the CWB was just a little comfortable in how it went about doing it.

The changes in the legislation that I think would be positive for the Prairies and for farmers as a whole are that they would have a variety of options in marketing a product.

We heard people complain a lot on the level of railway service. If we want competition for the railways, the best competition is value-added. The best competition is not to use the railways, but to process the grain there and then create a product that does not necessarily have to go in a hopper car. That is the best way to get competition for the railways, and that would happen on the Prairies. That was not allowed to happen, and could not happen, on the Prairies in the past. However, now we can look across the line at the malt plant or at the Alix malt plant in Alberta that is going through an expansion.

I look forward to those types of opportunities coming forward to our producers, as well as the opportunity for the barley growers who want to ship four or five containers of barley to Indonesia. In today's day and age, it is not a big deal. It is not the 1940s or 1930s, when we had telecommunication and travel issues. People hop on planes daily now. They talk across the waters all the time. People watch the Chicago grain markets daily. It is not the big issue that it was in the past.

I will sum up with some of the things that I have seen happen around here.

I am very optimistic for the future of wheat and barley farmers. I am very optimistic for farmers in general, and for their future. I am more optimistic now, I have to say, than I have ever been in my farming or political career.

We would not have got here without the help of a lot of great individuals. A lot of people fought in the trenches on this file. A lot of farmers put their own blood, sweat and tears into this file. There are farmers who went to jail to have the right to sell their own product. My hat goes off to those farmers, and I thank them. They kept the torch alive and they did not do it for themselves, but for their kids and the whole industry. They actually had the ambition and drive to think that they could do better.

Again, I take my hat off to these guys and thank them for being there and doing that job. The guys who went to jail made an ultimate sacrifice in giving up their time with their wives and families and going through the court system. I remember driving down to Lethbridge to watch one of the court proceedings and talking to a few of the guys. My buddy, Rick Strankman, took me down there. He said: "Hoback, you've got to see these guys. They're pure, and pure through".

They were not doing it because they were greedy. They were not doing it for any reason other than they thought it was the best thing for the market, for farmers and for their families, and they should have the right to market their grain as they see fit.

That is what we are going to do here today. We are going to create a new entity, and how this entity moves forward will be decided by farmers. It will go through a transition board and then a transition

period to rediscover itself. At the end of the day, the whole farm sector will be the stronger for it, and at the end of the day, a lot of constituents will say that this debate on whether to have a single desk is finally over.

Again, I would like to thank the minister and my colleagues. I encourage the members of the opposition to work with us as we move forward in agriculture in western Canada.

• (1345)

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, picking up on my hon. colleague's mention of blood, sweat and tears, we should all realize that a lot of blood, sweat and tears have gone to build this organization that has gained a worldwide reputation. Now we are pulling the rug out from underneath it.

I appreciate the work my colleague has done on the committee and I enjoy working with him. However, I want to defend those farmer elected directors who he is attacking today. I do not think that is right. These people have been elected by farmers. They represent the majority of farmers and now they are being replaced by five government robots, or stooges, and I do not think that is right.

We talk about moving wheat across the border. A lot of us have been involved with the American regulations, the country of origin labelling. We have seen how the border has been shut down to our pork and our beef. Now we think farmers will be able to move their wheat across the border. However, in this climate of protectionism, this buy America first, does he believe it is possible the border will be shut down to our wheat if we get enough wheat that goes across the border? In other words, are the Americans going to stand for having all of our good quality wheat going in to be mixed up with theirs? Could he answer that question?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I enjoy working with my colleague on the agriculture committee as well. I appreciate his passion for agriculture, even though we disagree on maybe how agriculture should move forward in the future.

He asked a question that is speculative in nature. When we look at trade, one thing we have done as a government is we have gone abroad and we have worked on trade agreements, creating proper rules so that science-based trade can proceed without interference. Those are things we have been working on with our American partners, through NAFTA, the free trade agreement, and those are things we have been working on across the board.

However, the misconception he is spreading is a combination of things. All of a sudden, everybody thinks that on August 1, 2012, all these trucks are going to be lined up at the border, heading south. The reality is the basis will change and it will reflect off a futures price that will be either out of Winnipeg or Minneapolis and then reflected back to the town of Prince Albert. That then will be the price they get at the truck.

Again, to say that we will ship all this grain into the U.S., I do not think that will happen. What will happen is farmers will look for value-added opportunities. They will look for other markets and they will use the new entity to sell into other markets. It is just that they will have a choice in how they do it.

Government Orders

• (1350)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have worked with the member on committee, as well, and I think we work reasonably well together, although we may disagree strenuously on this issue.

However, I take issue with the fact that he said that the members of the elected Canadian Wheat Board were not there to work for farmers. He is absolutely wrong on that. They were elected. The board changed at the beginning of 1998. It came out with somewhere around 10 options for farmers that it never had before. There are actually more options under the Canadian Wheat Board than there will be under the open market. They stood in election. They won their elections. Eight out of ten of them, pro single desk selling, won their elections and the government is taking the voices of farmers and votes away by this legislation. It is rolling over it, getting rid of the legislation, firing the board and coming in with a government appointed board.

Why did the government not do the proper study and take the time to do it right? The government has a majority. It could have held hearings in the west to hear from farmers. It could have seen the trouble spots. What about the transportation and collection system? What about producer cars? What about short line rails? How is the government going to ensure that they stay and are protected for farmers' interests?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, the member talks about short line rails. Short line rails and producer cars, which I think is more what he is referring to, are under the Canada Grain Act. They do not have anything to do with the Canadian Wheat Board Act. That right is being preserved and we know that will be used as they move forward.

Let us talk about the directors' elections. It is one thing that I always found very frustrating. In this so-called plebiscite that was held, I think 68,000 ballots were sent out 22,000 producers who actually produced wheat. Where did the extra ballots go? That has always been a frustration with the type of election the Wheat Board ran. No one knew who got to vote for whom. No one knew exactly how these ballots were being consumed.

The other thing that was never reflected in the ballots was if there was a combination of a producer who would farm 1,000 or 2,000 acres, maybe 10,000 acres, and grow thousands of tonnes, that person would have one vote and the guy who actually only had 100 acres and produced maybe only two to three tonnes, or a very small quantity, had the exact same number of votes.

Again, the Wheat Board is not a political organization. It is not a governing body. It is a business. Therefore, if we wanted to have a proper vote, then we should have had a vote based on tonnage or acreage that would have reflected what farmers who were in the commercial business of farming would have voted. However, there is no way that member or the Liberals would ever set up a system like that because they know the results would be exactly what will happen here today.

As far as this debate, it has been going on and on. Farmers are tired of it. They want to see this move forward. They do not want to see us catch up or have to spend a lot of time educating our

opposition members on why this needs to change. They just want to see it done, and that is what we are going to do.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and honoured to represent the riding of Portage—Lisgar, an amazing riding in rural Manitoba, full of producers, agriculture, manufacturers, small business, individuals and families that have built lives and communities on agriculture and the importance that agriculture brings to our country. I appreciate being able to support and represent farmers as their member of Parliament.

I want to thank my colleague, the member for Prince Albert and others who have worked so hard on this issue. Many of them are farmers. I want to give my colleagues the due respect they should have for the hard work they have done, as well as opposition members, who we disagree with on what we should do to help farmers. However, I believe the intent of the majority of opposition members is honourable in supporting farmers. I hope at the end of this debate we will be able to put aside all of the angst and division and we will truly see a viable and successful Canadian Wheat Board as well as choice for Canadian farmers.

First, I very strongly support Bill C-18. I will begin with the premise of freedom, freedom that all of us enjoy in the great country of Canada. We enjoy freedom as individuals, of faith and free speech. Business people enjoy the freedom of being able to market their goods and services. As long as the goods or services they market are legal, they should be able to market them within the regulations and laws of Canada. This is a freedom that so many western Canadian farmers who grow wheat and durum have been unable to experience. If all Canadians listening today begin with the thought of freedom for western Canadian farmers to market their wheat and durum just like farmers across the rest of Canada are able to do, that is a good foundation to build on the strength and validity of Bill C-18.

The legislation delivers on our government's long-standing commitment to give western farmers the marketing freedom they deserve. Just like there is a lot of excitement around the Jets coming back to Winnipeg, Manitoba, there is a lot of excitement among farmers and producers around the opportunity to have freedom in marketing their wheat.

I am proud of the role that agriculture plays in keeping our economy strong and stable. In 2009 the agricultural and food industry brought \$4.8 billion to the farm gate in Manitoba in total farm cash receipts. It generated just over \$4 billion in exports and the agricultural industry directly employed 30,000 Manitobans. The agricultural industry is booming in Manitoba. Some of the best crops are grown in that province. Right across our great country, the agriculture and agrifood industry accounted for over \$100 billion in economic activity and over 2.1 million jobs.

I want to speak for a moment about some of the industries in my riding.

Statements by Members

Can-Oat, which is an oat processing facility, has done remarkably well since it has been given the freedom to market oats. I visited the facility in Portage la Prairie. I am very proud and I know the people who work there are very proud of the work they do.

Keystone Grain, another business located in Winkler, Manitoba, is able to process all kinds of grains, market and sell them around the world.

Bunge, which is located in Altona in my riding, also processes canola and does a fantastic job. It has just expanded its facilities. We have contributed with Canada's economic action plan. We helped the town of Altona support Bunge and we have another value-added industry in my riding.

Quaker Farms grows and markets vegetables.

What is not in my riding is a pasta plant. There are no value-added industries for wheat or durum. No matter what side of the issue one is on, we want value-added industries to grow and I want them to grow in my riding.

● (1355)

These businesses are tremendous and show what our hard-working farmers and food processors can do when they have the liberty to run their businesses in a free and open market. For too long, Manitoba wheat and barley growers have had that field tilted against them.

On October 18, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food introduced legislation that aimed to level that field by giving farmers the right to choose how to market their wheat, durum and barley independently or through a voluntary Canadian wheat board. The marketing freedom for grain farmers act will give every farmer in western Canada the freedom to choose how to market their grain, whether that is to a buyer who pays the full price on delivery or through a pool offered by the Canadian Wheat Board. As has already been indicated, it is our intention to have this marketing choice system in place for August 1, 2012.

Western Canadian farmers want the same freedom and opportunity as other farmers in Canada and around the world and they want to be able to market their grain based on what is best for their own business. Again, just like any other business person in Canada, they want the same freedoms to market their wheat.

I just want to quote a couple of individuals from my riding, people who are producers and who are contributing to our economy.

Lyndon Thiessen a farmer in Winkler, Manitoba, wrote to me and said, "We market all our other crops and are looking forward to doing our wheat completely on our own".

Mark Elias, from Morden, Manitoba, which is my home town, wrote:

I am writing to encourage you to keep working at removing the Board. Please remove the board. It is costing us all very dearly. I know of businesses in your home town who cannot process wheat and sell products because of the Board. As a local producer I also do not have the option of selling my wheat directly into the US market thereby reducing my profits and the productive potential of Manitoba.

● (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar will have three minutes when the House returns to this matter.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a new study confirms something that every Albertan already knows. Nothing matches the experience of a visit to Alberta's majestic Rocky Mountains. The study entitled "The Economic Impact of Parks Canada" finds that visitors to Alberta's national parks account for more than half of the entire contribution that our world-class parks system makes to Canada's economy.

My riding of Wild Rose is home to Banff National Park, Canada's first and greatest national park. People from around the globe flock to this special place where tourists enjoy some of the world's most pristine wilderness combined with incredible visitor experiences.

This past weekend I was honoured to represent our government at the WinterStart Festival in Lake Louise, featuring men's World Cup skiing, with the women's races to follow this coming weekend.

The slopes at Lake Louise are in superb condition and we have tons of snow. I look forward to another great ski season in Banff, with visitors from around the world increasing the tourism dollars that our parks contribute to Canada's economy.

* * *

[*Translation*]

REEBOK-CCM HOCKEY

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we were dismayed to learn last Friday that Reebok-CCM Hockey in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu would be cutting 85 of its 125 jobs.

This company, which specializes in manufacturing hockey equipment, was a leader in the Haut-Richelieu manufacturing industry. In a region that has been hit hard by plant closure after plant closure, yet another source of jobs will be moving production to Asia.

With only a few weeks until Christmas, this announcement is a real tragedy for the families of those who will lose their jobs. It is also a blow to our community, since manufacturing jobs are good-quality jobs. While the Conservative government has been patting itself on the back every day, on the ground we are seeing the loss of hundreds of well-paying skilled jobs that enable Canadian families to live with dignity.

I want to reiterate my support for Michel Courcy of the United Steelworkers, as well as all of the workers, and I want to let them know that they can count on me and my NDP colleagues as they go through this difficult time.

Statements by Members

[English]

WOODLAND CARIBOU

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 25 our government announced the woodland caribou captive breeding partnering arrangement. This partnership, which involves Parks Canada, the British Columbia and Alberta governments, and the Calgary Zoo, aims to reverse the decline of woodland caribou and restore low-population herds within the mountain parks region.

This conservation strategy will focus on breeding woodland caribou for reintroduction into the wild and will re-establish a breeding population of caribou in Banff National Park.

This partnership will take advantage of the expertise of the Calgary Zoo's Centre for Conservation Research, which specializes in reintroduction programs for some of Canada's most endangered species.

The caribou has achieved emblematic status in Canada among other animals. Our government is committed to protecting Canada's wildlife and ecosystems. This conservation strategy for the woodland caribou is one of many important initiatives our government has undertaken for Canadians and our environment.

* * *

MYLES BURKE AND FREDDIE JACKSON

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last few months, Cape Breton has lost two pillars in our community, police chief Myles Burke and community leader Freddie Jackson.

Chief Burke was born and raised in Louisburg. He began his policing career over 30 years ago and became our chief in 2009. He was well respected not only in policing, but also for his volunteering. Chief Myles Burke will be sadly missed and forever remembered by his wife Jayne and daughters Nicole and Janine.

Freddie Jackson was born in St. John's, Newfoundland, and spent many years as managing editor of the *Cape Breton Post*. He was also known for his involvement in several community organizations and for his many years of coaching and contributions to sport. Freddie will be sadly missed and forever remembered by his wife Beatrice and his five daughters Stephanie, Melissa, Jillian, Nicola and Carmen.

Both of these men became my personal friends and I, along with many other people, will miss them dearly. They will continue to be great inspirations for their dedication and commitment.

* * *

● (1405)

CHARLES SAURIOL ENVIRONMENTAL DINNER

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 3 I had the honour to attend the 18th annual Charles Sauriol Environmental Dinner in Toronto. This annual event to celebrate the great conservationist and visionary, Charles Sauriol, is truly an inspiring event that not only raises funds to protect Toronto's natural areas, but also raises awareness of just how important conservation is to us.

Our government has made it a priority to secure the long-term protection of Canada's natural assets. Our vision and commitment with programs like the natural areas conservation program stand in support of the vision and legacy of Charles Sauriol.

Charles Sauriol's commitment to preserving the natural areas of Toronto is commendable and has resulted in the conservation of thousands of hectares of land for future generations to enjoy.

The dinner was truly a wonderful way to express support for the Conservation Foundation of Greater Toronto and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust. I want to thank members of these organizations for their commitment to a healthy environment.

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PRINCE ANDREW HIGH SCHOOL POLITICS CLUB

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge a special group of students from Prince Andrew High School in my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. I visited their class last month and I challenged them to become more politically engaged.

In response to my challenge, they began working with their teacher, Mr. Tim Halman, and together they have created a non-partisan, open invitation politics club. They have written a mission statement and have established goals for participation. They even plan to reach out to other high schools in the area.

On behalf of the House of Commons and Canadians everywhere, I would like to recognize the founding members of this group: Aref Taherzadeh, Thais Schlunzen, Cody Veinotte, Ian Kennedy, Brianna Titus, Julianna Robertson, Robbie Neate, Kimberly Halliday, Lily Levy, Brenna Levy, and Brennan Curry. They have answered the call to participate, and for that we should all be grateful.

* * *

FISHERMEN HELPING KIDS WITH CANCER

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in praise of the many volunteers across Canada who make a difference in our daily lives. I know for myself that some of the most significant and long-lasting endeavours that I have been involved in came from my volunteer activities.

I want to highlight Fishermen Helping Kids with Cancer, which will take place in Steveston, B.C., in my riding of Delta—Richmond East next week, December 3 and 4.

Cancer has touched every Canadian family, including my own. It is somehow doubly tough to lose our children to this devastating disease.

B.C.'s commercial fishing community is holding its first annual charity herring sale, which is open to the public. All proceeds will go to the B.C. Children's Hospital Foundation to benefit children with cancer.

Statements by Members

The inspiration comes from personal losses and by the ever popular charitable herring fishery that was a tradition in B.C. for over 50 years until 2007 and raised over \$250,000 for orphaned children. All aspects of the event are being donated.

Well done; this is a good cause championed by good people.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is a great day for western Canadian farmers. This afternoon Bill C-18, the marketing freedom for grain farmers act, will be voted on at third reading in the House. For many of the MPs on this side of the chamber, the fight for freedom has gone on for years, but for farmers in western Canada, their quest has gone on for decades.

More than 60 farmers have paid their own way to Ottawa to witness today's vote. They cannot wait for the day when they can finally market their own grain. They are here because they believe in freedom. Mr. Speaker, through you, we say thank you to them.

Mr. Speaker, through you to those farmers who went to jail because they believed in freedom, we say thank you.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the thousands of farmers across Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and B.C. who have fought season after season because they believe in freedom, we say thank you.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the young farmers who are so enthused about the freedom in their future, we say thank you.

Mr. Speaker, through you to farmers like Art Mainil, Art Walde and Lionel Byrd, who believed in freedom but who never lived to see this day, we say thank you.

It is their commitment to freedom that gives us the determination to bring real choice to western Canadian farmers.

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[Translation]

WAKEFIELD COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am most proud to rise in this House today to acknowledge the excellent work of a community in my riding. A number of my colleagues have probably had the opportunity to visit Wakefield in the municipality of La Pêche, and may have noticed, as I have, that Wakefield is a dynamic community and a major cultural and tourist hub.

• (1410)

[English]

Recently, an important project came to fruition in this community. Fifteen years ago Wakefield had a dream to have its own multi-functional community centre, and through hard work it was officially opened last Saturday.

This beautiful state-of-the-art building would not have been possible if it were not for the involvement of countless volunteers. In particular, I would like to mention the amazing collaborative work of the volunteers and board members of the Wakefield La Pêche Community Centre Cooperative and of its president, Stephen

Sabean. Mention must also be made of MNA Stéphanie Vallée; the mayor of La Pêche, Robert Bussière; municipal councillor Louis Rompré; and Caisse populaire Desjardins de Masham-Luskville.

I extend my congratulations to all.

* * *

[Translation]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on November 25, Canada has been participating in the global campaign of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.

This campaign reminds us that violence against women is a human rights violation. Our government is committed to supporting local projects to improve life for young women across Canada. That is why our government is calling for proposals for projects that will help eliminate the problem of violence against women on campuses.

Our government wants to provide communities and post-secondary institutions with more opportunities to actively prevent and reduce violence against young women. Violence against women has significant social and economic costs and affects every Canadian community. It is up to every individual to contribute to eliminating violence. It is up to all of us to change attitudes and take action to end violence against women.

* * *

[English]

GREY CUP

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was a sea of orange in BC Place stadium yesterday as a sellout crowd saw the BC Lions win their sixth Grey Cup 34-23 at the 99th Grey Cup in Vancouver.

The Winnipeg Blue Bombers played well, but the BC Lions were simply a better team yesterday. They were led by quarterback Travis Lulay, the most valuable player in the CFL; running back Andrew Harris, named most valuable Canadian; and receivers like Geroy Simon and others, not to mention ex-Surrey Rams kicker Paul McCallum, who kicked four field goals. The Lions took an early lead and held to the end.

The BC Lions are popular throughout the Lower Mainland and all of B.C. They typify the kind of modest, balanced approach to sports in the Canadian Football League, which is a source of pride for so many Canadians across the country.

Statements by Members

I congratulate the BC Lions on their sixth Grey Cup victory. We look forward to celebrating the Grey Cup this weekend in the Lower Mainland.

British Columbians look forward to the BC Lions defending their title at the 100th anniversary Grey Cup next year in Toronto. Go, Lions, go.

* * *

GREY CUP

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Vancouver there was wild cheering, shouts of adoration, dancing in the streets and love in the air, for our mighty and beloved BC Lions had just handed the Winnipeg Blue Bombers a thorough trouncing and returned the Grey Cup to British Columbia, its rightful home.

While we will try to be humble about this win, we will not forget that it was members of the Manitoba caucus who badgered our B.C. caucus into taking a substantial bet on the game. Casting our principles aside, we agreed to the wager. They were so foolish. There is no joy in the Manitoba caucus today, but there will be much joy in the hearts of a worthy charity to which we will donate the \$250 of Manitoba money.

I congratulate coach Wally Buono and the amazing BC Lions on their Grey Cup victory. They are indeed Canada's greatest football team ever.

* * *

ST. JOSEPH'S HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 150 years ago, the Sisters of St. Joseph first displayed the courage and vision to establish a hospital in our then young community of Guelph, at that time numbering only 3,000 or 4,000 people.

Today, the 254-bed long-term care facility that they could not then begin to imagine stands on the spot where it started out as a 16-bed clinic for the sick, elderly and infirm, and grew through the passionate work and sacrifice of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

We are so fortunate in Guelph to have a state-of-the-art health care facility and the help and care provided by its incredible nurses, health care workers, staff and volunteers, part of the reason Guelph is considered the most compassionate city in Canada.

For the sake of Guelph and our future generations, I can only hope that some day, 150 years from now, the same reflections will be repeated by others gathering to celebrate their 300th anniversary in a facility that we cannot now, in our wildest dreams, begin to imagine.

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IMMIGRATION

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that next year our Conservative government will increase settlement funding for new Canadians in 11 provinces and territories, including British Columbia and Alberta.

In fact, since 2006 our Conservative government has tripled settlement funding. This comes after the Liberal government froze settlement funding for over a decade.

Our government is committed to ensuring that settlement funding is allocated in a fair manner and that all immigrants have access to the same level of services, regardless of where they choose to settle.

This year's settlement funding allocations reflect the fact that fewer immigrants are choosing to settle in Ontario. In fact, the share of immigrants settling in Ontario has decreased from 64% in 2005 to 52% in 2010.

Our government's actions are proof of our commitment to help newcomers to Canada settle and integrate quickly.

* * *

● (1415)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the dangerous way the government has targeted police forces across the country is a new low.

[*Translation*]

The Minister of Public Safety really enjoys saying that he will give police officers the tools they need to keep our communities safe, but the Conservatives have quite simply ignored the front-line police officers who were asking them not to eliminate the last restrictions on precision and assault weapons.

However, the Conservatives insist on pushing their incarceration agenda, even though police chiefs have said that it is an unbalanced approach that will simply not work.

[*English*]

The real crime is the way Conservative backbenchers are sitting on their hands instead of standing up for police. Those MPs refuse to speak up against a Prime Minister who is ignoring police chiefs and depriving them of the tools they are asking for. When will they finally get on side with police and keep our communities safe?

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, marketing freedom is so close that western Canadian grain farmers can almost taste it. Farmers like Dale Mainil, nephew of Art Mainil, Blair Stewart, Herb Axten, Al Johnston, and others, including the Saskatchewan and Alberta ministers of agriculture, made their way to Ottawa to voice their support for farmers and for their right to marketing freedom.

The proposed legislation would allow farmers in western Canada to have the freedom to sell their grains on an open market at a time and place of their choosing, and to seek out the best possible buyer for their top-quality crops.

Oral Questions

The Canadian Wheat Board would remain a voluntary option for farmers who wish to pool their grains. We have already begun to see the benefits of marketing freedom in western Canada with a new \$50 million pasta processing facility in Regina and a \$6 million storage expansion in Alberta.

I would encourage the opposition to stand with the government and vote to pass this important legislation tonight, so that western Canadian grain farmers can finally receive the marketing freedom they want and deserve.

[*Translation*]

Our government is balancing the need for a cleaner and healthier environment with protecting jobs and economic growth. We need an effective agreement, and that is why the major emitters must absolutely be at the table. The Kyoto protocol does not include major emitters like China and the United States and therefore will not work. Canada will not sign onto a new agreement that does not include all major emitters.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are flabbergasted to find out the Conservatives want to break our solemn commitment on the Kyoto protocol. Of the 191 countries that signed and ratified the Kyoto protocol agreement, Canada is the only country repudiating it.

Canada's obligations under this agreement are legally binding. Canada's obligations to fight climate change are morally binding. Canada's obligations to future generations should be clear to all.

How can the Conservatives justify abandoning Canada's legal and moral obligations to fight climate change? How can they betray future generations so irresponsibly?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is balancing the need for a cleaner and healthier environment by protecting jobs and economic growth. We need an effective agreement. Effective means it must include large emitters. The Kyoto protocol does not include major emitters like China and the United States, and therefore will not work.

Canada will not sign onto a new agreement that does not include all major emitters.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives set weak insipid targets and they did not even meet their own targets. They did not get the job done.

Canada signed a legally binding international agreement. Instead of even trying to honour our word, Conservatives choose to abandon the Kyoto protocol. This is nothing less than environmental vandalism. This irresponsible action harms the planet, and kills the next generation of clean energy and Canadian jobs.

Why will the government not be responsible, show leadership, and join the rest of the world in the fight against climate change? Why is it betraying Canadians' commitment to the environment?

• (1420)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions by 17% below 2005 levels by 2020 and we are making good progress.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no balance. That is completely irresponsible. The Conservatives want to withdraw Canada from the Kyoto protocol and they will do so only after the summit in Durban. The Minister of the Environment's presence in Durban is a complete charade. He is going there to obstruct and stifle progress, derail talks and act like an environmental vandal. Even Brian Mulroney signed international treaties against climate change, so why are the Conservatives doing the opposite? Why are they betraying future generations? Why are they betraying the future of our planet?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the hon. member, it is strange to hear him use the word "balance". We want to balance protecting the environment with creating jobs. A government cannot take into account both the environment and the economy with an election platform that advocates \$10 billion in taxes, or an environmental platform that would increase gas by 10¢ a litre.

Mr. Speaker, let us be clear: we need an effective agreement, which takes the major greenhouse gas emitters and the protocol—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for Halifax.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's position makes no sense, whether from a legal, moral or scientific perspective. By opting out of Kyoto, Canada is cutting itself off from the rest of the world. Thus, it is sure to be left out of important decisions concerning the future of the planet. The Conservatives prefer to play by themselves in their oil-sands box. Why?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. Canada is finding that a good number of countries are moving to our position.

Canada is working toward a single new international climate change regime that will include all major international emitters, both developed and developing countries.

At the same time, Canada continues to pursue our targets of reducing greenhouse gases by 17% by 2020.

Oral Questions

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. That was not an answer. The truth is that Conservative inaction on environment is killing Canadian jobs. Now the government is trying to change the channel by reannouncing its failed clean air agenda. The irresponsible government is making us a laughingstock internationally.

Why will Conservatives not come clean with the world, why will Conservatives not come clean with Canadians, and why will they not admit that Canada is pulling out of Kyoto?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her lob question. It gives me a chance to say that I am extremely pleased to inform all of my hon. colleagues that we have renewed the clean air regulatory agenda.

We will provide \$600 million over the next five years in scientific research, monitoring, modelling, regulation, and enforcement required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other toxic pollutants.

Our government can balance both environmental stewardship and protecting the economy.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the government wants to be honest, straightforward and transparent, and that is what leads me to ask a very simple question.

If it is the intention of the Government of Canada to renege on a treaty that was ratified by the Parliament of Canada, why would the Government of Canada not say so now? Why would it not just bring it forward for debate in Parliament now? Why not do it before it goes through the charade of participating in the conference in Durban? Why such a double standard?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, talking about honesty, let us not forget that under the Liberals Canada's GHG emissions increased by 27% to 33% over Kyoto targets. Under the Liberals, Canada's total carbon dioxide emissions increased by 28 points per capita.

Our government is balancing the need for a cleaner and healthier environment by protecting jobs and economic growth. The Kyoto protocol does not include major emitters like China and the United States, and therefore will not work.

We remain committed to our targets to reduce emissions by 17%—

• (1425)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, now that the minister is talking about jobs, let us talk about jobs.

The real rate of unemployment today in Canada is 10%, which means that there are two million unemployed in Canada, people who are discouraged, who have stopped looking for work, and who are actually out of work. It is two million people.

I would like to ask the minister a simple question. Why is it that the only initiative that the government is planning to take on January 1, 2012, is a middle-class tax increase? How can the government possibly justify that when there are two million unemployed Canadians?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our economic action plan is working. Close to 600,000 net new jobs have been created since 2009.

I must remind the House that the Liberals refused to support our budget. They walked away from the family caregiver tax credit, the children's arts tax credit, the volunteer firefighters tax credit, tax relief for the manufacturing sector, a tax credit for small businesses that creates jobs, and making the gas tax fund permanent.

This is what the Liberals walked away from.

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[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government does not realize how serious the unemployment problem is, and at the same time, it is guilty of excessive spending.

The government is wasting money on baubles and trinkets. The Minister of Foreign Affairs spent \$6,000 to replace Pellán paintings with portraits of the Queen. Furthermore, he spent \$55,000 on flags for the Diamond Jubilee, completely ignoring the real concerns of Canadians.

How can the government justify such excessive spending on baubles and trinkets?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government strongly believes in supporting and recognizing Canadian history. It strongly believes in supporting and acknowledging the head of state of Canada, and certainly has made a number of initiatives in this regard. We think these are good things for Canada and we strongly support them.

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CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is holding closed-door border security negotiations with the U.S., and Canadians deserve to know what is on the table.

Is it iris scans? Is it longer waits at the border? Is it increased fees for businesses and travellers? What is on the table?

Every single time the Minister of International Trade goes to Washington, we lose as Canadians. This deal could have major implications for Canadian families. Why is the government keeping Canadians in the dark?

Oral Questions

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know this member understands that it is tremendously important that trade across our borders is open, that manufacturing sectors, particularly in southern Ontario and southern Quebec, can get their products back and forth across the border.

Canada is a trading nation, and this government is focused on jobs and the economy like a laser. We want to ensure that we deal with some of the challenges that employers have in getting their goods and services across the border. That is why we are working very closely with the Obama administration on a deal to try to address some of these challenges that are affecting both of our economies.

We are going to continue those discussions and hope to have something in short order.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that the Conservatives put us in a major trade deficit. It is costing jobs and it must be stopped. From softwood lumber to buy American, every time the government tries to negotiate a deal with the U.S., Canada comes out the big loser. This time the privacy of Canadians is at stake.

Will the Conservatives finally stop their secret negotiations and tell Canadians what will be sacrificed in this deal? What are the Conservatives willing to give up just to push through this deal with the United States?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians' right to privacy is something that this government respects and strongly supports but we also strongly support Canadian sovereignty. This is not an issue where Canada needs the United States. This is an issue where we need to work together to ensure that we protect jobs on both sides of the border. That could be more important in no other area of the country than his own constituency of Windsor where auto parts will cross the border some 6 to 12 times in a car manufacturing facility. We want to make it as easy as possible so that the auto workers in Windsor and southern Ontario have the very best economic conditions, not just to succeed but to thrive.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the head the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police made it clear that the government's prisons agenda is unbalanced. He said, "Is there a balance needed? Absolutely". Police chiefs know that keeping our streets safe must include a strategy for crime prevention, something they say that Bill C-10 just does not do.

Why are the Conservatives dead set on ignoring our police chiefs and ramming through this unbalanced prisons agenda?

• (1430)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. member has been, but we have had a complete approach. Our national crime prevention strategy, the national anti-drug strategy, the aboriginal justice system and drug courts are all part of it. However, getting tough on violent criminals is also part of our agenda, and I am very proud of our complete approach in this area.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, ignoring our chiefs of police is a new low. The government is about to pass an irresponsible prisons agenda that our top cops insist lacks the proper balance. Police officers say that they cannot keep communities safe without a focus on crime prevention. The provinces are saying the same thing and so is the opposition, yet the government refuses to listen.

Why does the government not care what our chiefs of police think about crime prevention? Why is it burdening provincial budgets with this unbalanced approach?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that every attempt to get tough on crime will not have the support of the NDP. However, I am very pleased and proud of the support that we have received from police and police chiefs. He can selectively quote whatever he wants, but law enforcement agencies across this country know that we are on the right track, that we are standing up for victims and that we are giving them the tools they need to fight crime in this country.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government is preparing to eliminate all restrictions on extremely dangerous firearms, such as long-range rifles and semi-automatic assault weapons. Consequently, it will be easier to purchase such deadly weapons as the Steyr HS .50, which can pierce a bulletproof vest from a distance of over 1.5 km. The Conservatives are eliminating tools that the police need to protect us.

Will the Conservatives undertake to maintain control over the sale of weapons used primarily to commit crimes?

[*English*]

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very disappointing that the NDP is left with no argument to defend the long gun registry and resorts to trying to mislead Canadians. There are no changes in Bill C-19 with regard to the classifications of firearms, to licensing, or to the requirements to have a licence to purchase or transfer a firearm. The NDP needs to stop trying to mislead Canadians and tell the truth.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, why should I expect an answer that makes sense from a completely senseless government that will not listen to reason?

There is no justification for eliminating restrictions on powerful weapons that have absolutely nothing to do with hunting. The Conservatives could not care less about the advice of the RCMP, the provinces and their own advisors, who are saying that Bill C-19 will increase the sale and trafficking of illegal weapons. This is not coming from me, but from them.

Why do the Conservatives want to make things easier for criminals at any cost?

[English]

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were very pleased to hear from front-line officers over the last couple of weeks who overwhelmingly supported abolishing the long gun registry. They have asked us to get tough on violent criminals and those who prey on our children, which is what we are asking the NDP to support instead of trying to perpetuate this misleading information regarding Bill C-19, which will not change classifications of firearms, licensing requirements or transfer requirements.

* * *

[Translation]

LANGUAGE OF WORK IN QUEBEC

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government lacks vision. Rather than working with the NDP to quickly pass Bill C-315 to protect the language rights of Quebecers working in federal works, undertakings or businesses, the Conservatives instead announced that they would be setting up a committee about which we know nothing.

Coming from a government that has invoked closure eight times since Parliament resumed, this announcement has us doubting the government's motives.

Why make the process longer rather than taking action?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the French language is an integral part of our history, our identity and our daily life. We are very proud of it. French is one of the founding languages of Canada.

However, we must not confuse the issue. The NDP has not done its homework and is now proposing to create useless and cumbersome paperwork for these entities. We have to be serious about this matter and conduct consultations to see whether there is a problem with the language of work at private entities that come under federal jurisdiction. That is what we will do and we will do it the right way.

• (1435)

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I feel like I am watching an improve skit set up by Yvan Ponton.

The Conservatives are proposing to set up a committee with an unspecified mandate, unknown membership and an undetermined budget. That is a waste of time and money.

Oral Questions

Do they not know that by voting with us at second reading, they will send the bill to a committee already funded by the House?

If the Conservatives are serious about this and really want to protect the French language in federally regulated businesses, why do they not vote with the NDP to send Bill C-315 to the Standing Committee on Official Languages?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP should first do its homework instead of inventing situations to get the day's news clip by improvising policies about such a sensitive issue. What we must do is conduct consultations. That is why we will strike an advisory committee to conduct consultations about whether the language of work is an issue in federally regulated private businesses. We will do this the right way. It is not true that we will bungle the job on such a sensitive issue for purely partisan and political reasons.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after pressure from the Ontario New Democrats, the McGuinty government has agreed to extend the deadline for the stimulus program for three Hamilton projects and is now calling on the federal government to be reasonable and grant the same common sense extension.

These projects are vital to Hamilton. Will the government be reasonable and grant the extension?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have said before, the date has to be respected. It was over two and a half years to deliver thousands of projects all around this country, which what most municipalities have done. I am sorry, but the date was the date, and it is over.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently the Conservative government has shown a big appetite to change long-standing institutional names, so I might suggest one: changing the minister responsible for EI from “employment insurance” to “erroneous information” because last week, in the Charlottetown *Guardian*, she stated, inaccurately, regarding EI, “We are currently averaging 23 days for speed of the first payment”.

She now knows full well that what she said was totally untrue. Could she tell the House today how long it is taking people who are eligible for EI to get their first payment?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did address this issue last week. We are facing challenges meeting the needs of Canadians. We are investing in new systems, in automation and in upgrading of our systems so we can respond to Canadians in a timely manner, because they all deserve and need certain benefits in a timely manner.

Oral Questions

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I still do not think she understands the situation. I asked her the question on the indicator and she had a Charlie Sheen moment, handing the wheel over to her deputy.

The speed indicator measures two things: the time it takes for the payment to be issued and the time it takes for notice of non-payment to be issued. It is tough putting oil in the tank and food in the fridge with a notice of non-payment.

The minister misrepresented that particular statistic as if everybody was getting a cheque in 23 days. Will the minister stand today, correct the record and tell us how long unemployed Canadians are—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Human Resources.

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the facts are the facts. On average, 80% of the time, people do get their cheques within 23 days. It is those who are eligible for cheques who receive them. Mr. Speaker, you do not receive one in 23 days because you are not eligible.

We are trying to improve on this because Canadians do need better than that and we want to be there to help them in their time of need.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister has no clue. She talks about effectiveness and efficiencies but she should check her departmental statistics: speed of EI payment, worst rate in five years; EI call service level, worst performance in six years; average EI processing time, worst in the last five years; percentage of calls being hung up on, the highest in six years. When people call and press 2 to get an attendant, they actually have a better chance of being hung up on. Is this the minister's idea of efficiency and effectiveness?

We should be changing the name of Service Canada to no Service Canada because unemployed Canadians—

• (1440)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people at Service Canada are working hard to see that Canadians do get the benefits they need. I do not think they need to be treated the way the hon. member just treated them. They deserve better than that because they are working to help Canadians. We are trying to help them do that by automating the system—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. minister has the floor.

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, we are trying to help them achieve better service levels because Canadians need and deserve that, especially in their time of need.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the current health accord says that funding commitments require that jurisdictions comply with reporting provisions. The Conservatives

have failed to live up to this commitment. The minister says that the next accord will be about accountability but, without reporting, she cannot tell us what the current accords have achieved.

The government is sleepwalking into the next accord, blind to what happened under the last one. Where is the accountability now?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had very productive meetings with the health ministers this past Friday. We discussed many important issue, such as obesity, suicide prevention, mental health and MS.

Minister Bolduc, Quebec's health minister, said that he felt there was excellent collaboration among the provinces and the federal government. He felt that we were listening to them.

That is great news. It reflects the success of our discussions and advances that we have made together to better the health care system for all Canadians. Our government will not be like the previous Liberal government that slashed health and education transfers to the provinces.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister failed to address the key issue. The federal government has invested almost \$160 billion in health care under the current accord. However, because of the government's mismanagement, Canadians do not know what value they are getting. The government has failed to ensure proper reporting on the impact of that spending.

Much of what the Conservatives promised, a pharmaceutical strategy, public health strategy and long-term care, are nowhere in sight. When will they finally demonstrate some leadership on this accord? Why wait until 2014 to be accountable?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what was not stated in that statement is that the 2004 accord also required a committee to review the accomplishments. That work is currently being carried out in the Senate. I am looking forward to receiving the findings of the review from the Senate committee, which will be completing that report in the next month or so.

One of our goals is to ensure there is accountability in the way the money is being spent. I will continue to work with the provinces and territories in the delivery of health care to their residents.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government's record on health is appalling. Not only has it been unable to have current health accord commitments honoured, but now the Minister of Health has said that she will not be involved in negotiations for a free trade agreement with the EU. The accord calls for greater protection for pharmaceutical patents, which would force us to spend billions of dollars more every year.

Will the minister do the responsible thing and intervene in order to ensure that we do not have to pay more for our medication?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the meeting I had on Friday was a great opportunity to hear about what the provinces are doing to improve health care in their jurisdictions. Minister MacDonald, Nova Scotia's health minister, told the media that the meetings were very productive and that the discussions focused on issues that are important to all jurisdictions. The minister from Quebec also said that there was very good harmony among all partners. They all had the same goal and that was to improve the health outcomes for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that this issue relates to the CETA, not the provinces. If this is the government's idea of defending the interests of Canadians, so much for that.

We will have to spend an estimated \$2.8 billion more a year on drugs if Canada signs this agreement with the EU, and Canadians will receive nothing in return: no access to better drugs, generic drugs or low prices.

Why is the minister taking this file so lightly without showing any leadership? Why is she defending large pharmaceutical companies instead of Canadians?

- (1445)

[English]

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I absolutely disagree with the premise of the hon. member's question.

I would remind the hon. member opposite that our government always protects and advances Canada's interests during international negotiations, and we will only enter into an agreement that is in Canada's best interest. We will continue to consult closely with Canadian stakeholders and with provincial and territorial governments with respect to all issues regarding the CETA with the European Union.

The benefits to Canadians are clear: a trade agreement with the European Union is expected to boost Canada's economy by \$12 billion and increase two-way trade by 20%.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of Agriculture was joined by the agriculture ministers of Saskatchewan and Alberta on behalf of the minister from British Columbia to explain the importance of the marketing freedom for grain farmers act to western Canada. For far too long, western Canadian grain farmers have been treated like second-class citizens. That is why we introduced Bill C-18 to give western Canadian grain farmers the right to sell their grain to whomever they choose, including to a voluntary Canadian wheat board.

Could the minister please outline the importance of passing Bill C-18 as quickly as possible?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Brandon—Souris, for the great job he has done in getting us to this historic day. This is a great day. We celebrate it with my colleagues from Alberta and Saskatchewan, joined by my colleague from British Columbia and by dozens of actual producers from western Canada.

This is a tremendous day. This is a movement forward. This is what we have been waiting for for decades. We will get the job done tonight.

* * *

*[Translation]***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Ms. Éloise Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, looming civilian staff cuts at Canadian Forces Base Valcartier are causing concern in my riding because 1,400 civilians who work on the base might lose their jobs. These are civilians who play an important role and allow the Canadian Forces to do their work effectively and safely.

Can the minister tell us here and now whether he intends to cut jobs at Valcartier?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like all departments, the Department of National Defence is looking across the board at our budgets. We are looking at individual efforts to find efficiencies. With respect to managing the workforce, we want to ensure we have the right people in the right place at the right cost to taxpayers. This includes always examining a range of options to find processes designed to increase those efficiencies to ensure we are making smart decisions on behalf of the government and, most importantly, on behalf of taxpayers.

[Translation]

Ms. Éloise Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of Valcartier who are worried about losing their jobs because of cuts by this government cannot wait and see what happens and wait while the government wastes its time with such studies.

Last month, we learned that the Department of National Defence was considering selling some of its properties and closing some facilities as a cost-cutting measure.

Oral Questions

The minister refused to answer Canadians' questions then, so I am asking him again: will the minister promise to keep all the bases open?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as with issues related to families and businesses, the Government of Canada is continuing to review its resources in an effort to find effective solutions.

[English]

We are in a position, obviously, with the slowing of the global economy, to make important smart decisions on behalf of taxpayers. What does not help is when members of the opposition, as the member just did, get up and cast fear and doubt across communities and across bases in this country.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister will tell us how many bases will have to close when the government is forced to pay the true costs of the F-35s.

Norway has acknowledged that the true cost of their 52 F-35s will be \$40 billion or more. Are the Conservatives so blindly committed to the F-35 boondoggle because someone in Washington told them so, or are they prepared to act independently in our national interest and put this out for tender?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many times we need to repeat the same end story.

The F-35 did go out to competition. It won out. Our government's preference is to put our trust in our pilots and materiel experts who know the importance of the F-35 program, which is producing the 21st century fighter our military needs while at the same time sustaining quality aerospace jobs across Canada.

• (1450)

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised to hear the government admit to such blind adherence to Liberal government policy, but it was, after all, the associate minister who turned a Liberal procurement initiative into his own, and I quote, “crusade”.

National Defence is facing a fiscal crunch. Instead of cutting back on bases and instead of cuts to navy operations, why will the government not agree to have a competition to replace the F-18s? When will it put this deal out to tender?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all reasonable people agree that we need aircraft to defend Canada's sovereignty. Our plan is on track. An extensive and rigorous competition has taken place. It happened, as was stated, under the previous Liberal government. If the opposition members had their way, they would cancel the equipment our air force agrees is the best our men and women need to do their job effectively, efficiently and safely.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment sure likes to stick to his talking points

on the future of climate change negotiations, but the reality is that the plan is to ensure that there will be no future international agreement.

Why are the Conservatives misleading Canadians and the international community by trying to hide the fact that they are actually negotiating in bad faith?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that question from the Liberals is pretty rich, given that Kyoto represents one of the biggest blunders of the previous Liberal government. They made it even worse by cynically embracing Kyoto while knowing they would never work to fulfill their obligations.

In Durban, Canada will continue to work to encourage the international community to embrace a new international climate change agreement that includes all major emitters.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in question period on Friday, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs responded to a question on the crisis in Attawapiskat by actually blaming the community. October 27, Chief Theresa Spence declared a state of emergency. A month later, the minister says he will send some of his officials to investigate. What will they investigate—that people are living in tents, that winter is coming, that the Red Cross has already decided to move in?

When will the minister act immediately to work with the community and fix the situation?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are deeply concerned about this situation. We have had officials in that community at least once a month, because we are building a school in the community. Since coming to government, we have invested very significantly in the community. My officials are in the community today to investigate why the first nation is facing so many challenges, given the significant funding for housing, infrastructure, education and administration.

I spoke with my officials today, and they are making sure—

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

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the City of Calgary negotiated in good faith with the federal government for three years to build badly needed recreation centres in fast-growing parts of the city. The city spent millions as part of the application process. Mayor Nenshi has pointed to the Conservative government's bad faith on this issue. Why did the Conservatives pull the plug, and why are they taking Calgary for granted?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, PPP Canada Inc. is a great arm's-length organization that analyzes all sorts of projects all across this country. We are looking forward to some of these investments that will help municipalities with their water and their sewers and their major infrastructure projects.

The projects in Calgary actually did not qualify for P3 funding at this time.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately that answer will not help Calgary families. If they were not going to receive funding, why were they not told three years ago?

The City of Calgary was told the project only needed political approval. If recreation centres were not eligible for funding, why did the government's website say they were? Why was this information mysteriously removed from the website just hours after the mayor's press conference?

Calgary families are waiting for an answer. When will the Conservatives come clean?

• (1455)

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the opposition stands up and asks questions about PPP Canada Inc. when, if we go back in history, those members actually voted against putting PPP Canada Inc. in place as an arm's-length organization that would analyze infrastructure requirements across this country and look at a new concept of partnering with other levels of government and the private sector to fulfill the infrastructure requirements of these communities.

I would encourage those members to support some of these investments, rather than criticizing them.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the NDP unveiled a new ad campaign targeting our government's commitment to end the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry once and for all. The ad claims that there are "no more safeguards" for dangerous firearms—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Once again I will ask hon. members to hold off on their applause until either the end of the question or maybe until the end of the minister's answer.

The hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie has the floor.

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Mr. Speaker, the ad claims there are "no more safeguards" for dangerous firearms. This is a laughably preposterous and illogical statement, as firearms licensing remains unchanged.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety please comment on these misleading advertisements?

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Sault Ste. Marie for his good work on this file.

The NDP clearly does not understand the Canadian firearms program or does not understand classification. The firearm in the ad that was leaked to the media this weekend is clearly a restricted firearm.

Why is the NDP misleading Canadians instead of speaking the truth? It is because there is no valid argument in support of the long gun registry, so those members resort to half-truths and misinformation.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the excellent work done by our armed forces in Afghanistan would not have been possible without the help of the Afghan interpreters who put their lives and those of their families at risk in order to help Canada. Although they were promised refugee status in Canada, two-thirds of the interpreters who have applied have had their applications refused.

Why are the Conservatives abandoning those who helped Canada at a very difficult time and who put their lives and those of their families at risk to help our armed forces?

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that our government recognizes these brave and courageous Afghans. They made a significant contribution to our mission and saved Canadian lives.

That is why we introduced the special visa program: to help former translators facing exceptional risk or serious injuries to bring their families to Canada. That program allowed for 450 interpreters and their families, but we have expanded it by almost 20%. Now 550 Afghan interpreters and their families are able to come to this country to find safety, security and a new life in our country.

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MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, The families of cyclists and pedestrians killed in truck collisions joined me this morning to call on the minister to mandate side guards.

Karen Hartmann talked about her pain in losing her husband when he was crushed, and her daughter described life without her father. Four different studies from the EU, Germany and the UK showed side guards reduce fatalities by up to 50%.

How many more preventable deaths will it take for the government to act?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our thoughts and support go out to all those who have been involved in tragic bicycle and pedestrian accidents.

We are always looking at ways to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety in the presence of motor vehicles.

*Points of Order***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, the Egyptian people have had the chance to experience democracy for the first time in more than 30 years, in multi-party elections. Freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law are principles that our government stands firmly behind and are something that was not an option under the former Mubarak regime.

As many of my constituents are watching closely, could the Minister of Foreign Affairs please update the House on the democratic transition that is taking place in North Africa?

• (1500)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the courage and the determination of the Egyptian people are a real example for the world. Our hearts and minds are with them today as they undertake a democratic transition. We want to wish them well in exercising the legitimate right to represent those who govern themselves.

This morning I met with the Egyptian ambassador and underlined Canada's wish that the transition to democracy continue without delay and that the basic rights of Egyptians would be respected. We stand with the people of Egypt and look forward to working with them in this democratic transition.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in a disturbing pattern, the government continues to abandon Canadians detained abroad. Henk Tepper, a New Brunswick potato farmer, has been in prison for eight months in Beirut, even though he has not been charged with any crime. His health is deteriorating, yet our officials have visited him only once. This man remains jailed, without any charges.

Why does the government refuse to protect Canadian citizens abroad and will the minister intervene and ensure his safe return before Christmas?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government remains concerned about and I assure the House is very active in Mr. Tepper's case. We know that this is a very difficult time for Mr. Tepper and his family. However, based on information we have received, public profile would not be in Mr. Tepper's best interests at this point.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a new round of climate change negotiations is starting today, and the Conservatives' position is contradictory to say the least.

On the one hand, the minister claims that he will be "tough" on developing countries that are not doing their part, but on the other hand, he plans on abandoning our formal Kyoto commitments. As the environment commissioner said, the only thing that the government has managed to lower is its own greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Who is the minister trying to kid by saying that he will urge developing countries to do their part, when Canada itself is an environmental delinquent?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

Canada is working to create a single new international climate change regime, which includes commitments made by all the major emitters.

[*English*]

We are working with our international colleagues to create a new international climate change agreement that will include all major emitters.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Bob Bjornrud, Minister of Agriculture for Saskatchewan.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Evan Berger, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for Alberta.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier on a point of order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Ms. Éloïse Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the member for Ottawa—Orléans took advantage of my not being in my seat and insinuated that, in a statement I made on November 23, I put words in his mouth that he never uttered. Today I would like to correct the statement he made at the time. I shall read exactly what was said on November 22 in the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

I think it is rather inappropriate to use the official languages committee to make such inflammatory remarks. Canada's linguistic duality is essential to the country's survival.

A little further, we read:

Because this issue is raised in every meeting, I would like to take a few moments of my time here to point out that I was among the most disappointed of MPs when we learned of the appointment of a non-bilingual auditor general.

When the appointment was announced, I reacted strongly, wanting to know where the mistake had been made. The question I asked was, "Are you asking me to believe that nowhere in this country is there an accountant, an auditor, who is not just as qualified as the one we have hired, but who is also bilingual?"

I think that is clear enough. To put things in perspective, I will also reread my statement to make certain that everyone sees that the words I spoke were found in the remarks of the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans.

I would like to read my statement, which will not take very long—

• (1505)

The Speaker: I think the hon. member has had enough time to present her argument, but the Chair believes that this disagreement over facts is not a valid point of order. I shall end the discussion now.

The hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although my colleague, the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and member for Ottawa West—Nepean, is not here, I would like to remind him, regarding what he said during oral questions last Friday, that I am the member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, and my name is Djaouida Sellah, not Pauline Marois.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table a special report from the Canadian Human Rights Commission entitled, “Human Rights Accountability and National Security Practises”.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(e), this document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

* * *

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration entitled, “Supplementary Estimates (B), 2011-12”.

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities in relation to supplementary estimates (b) 2011-2012.

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CANADA LABOUR CODE

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-361, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (minimum age of employment).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce this bill which complements the incredible work of young members in the trade union movement who are raising awareness about Canada's inadequate minimum age laws and to advocate for Canada to ratify International Labour Organisation convention 138.

Routine Proceedings

My bill would bring federal labour legislation into compliance with ILO convention 138 by ensuring that the age of employment shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling, which in Canada is age 16.

This threshold is set to protect the health and well-being of young people, and to ensure that they have the proper means to develop as individuals and citizens through sufficient education.

Just to be clear, my bill is not targeted at teens who work at Timmies after school. I fully appreciate that many students need part-time work to save for post-secondary education, help their families survive in these difficult economic times or to gain valuable working experience.

My bill would make an explicit exception for the light work of persons between 13 and 15 years of age. It states that such work may be permitted if it is not likely to be harmful to their health or development and is not such as to prejudice their attendance at school, their participation in vocational orientation or training programs.

However, there is an urgent need for Canada to act on adopting a minimum age law. We need to be clear that we do not condone child labour and we need to reverse the trend of increasing young people injured on the job. We have a duty to protect young Canadians.

It is shameful that all the existing minimum age laws under Canada's federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions currently contravene convention 138. In some cases, as with the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta, official minimum age laws have actually weakened in recent years, dropping to as low as 12 years of age.

I hope that passage of my bill will be the impetus the government needs to finally sign on to ILO convention 138. Canada should be a leader in the fight to defeat child labour globally, but instead we remain passively complicit in, if not active proponents of, child labour here at home. If Canadians were aware of this fact, I am sure they would wholeheartedly agree that the time to act is now.

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

* * *

• (1510)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-362, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (increase of maximum number of weeks: combined weeks of benefits).

She said: Mr. Speaker, all too often the government pays lip service to supporting women without taking any concrete steps to improve the lives of women and girls. Offering posters and platitudes simply is not good enough.

Routine Proceedings

We need to take action now. That is why I am pleased to reintroduce legislation today that would make the employment insurance system fair for working mothers. One of the many barriers that prevent women from accessing EI entitlements is the anti-stacking provisions in the Employment Insurance Act. For example, these provisions prevent mothers who have secured maternity and parental benefits from accessing regular EI benefits in the event that they lose their jobs during these officially sanctioned leaves.

With layoff announcements still coming daily, new mothers often find that their workplaces are closing during their maternity leave, or they return to work but lose their jobs soon after. Shamefully, they find that they no longer qualify for the employment insurance benefits for which they have paid.

My bill would bring fairness to working mothers by eliminating the 50-week cap and changing the qualifying period so individuals could access their maternity, parental, sickness and compassionate care benefits without worrying that if they lost their jobs in the interim they would be left without EI.

Working moms deserve the support of this House. I urge all members to give unanimous consent to pass this bill now.

Finally, I want to thank the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan for seconding this bill and for her continuing support of this initiative. I know that when that bill comes before her committee, she will lead the fight for fairness for working mothers.

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

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CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION ACT

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-363, An Act respecting conscientious objection to the use of taxes for military purposes.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this bill respecting conscientious objection to the use of taxes for military purposes. As an aside, I thank my colleague from New Westminster—Coquitlam for seconding this bill.

According to this bill, once an individual registers with the Minister of National Revenue as a conscientious objector, he or she may then request that a portion of taxes for military purposes be credited to a special conscientious objectors' account. This money would then be used for any non-military peace-building purposes.

I would like to congratulate my former colleague, Bill Siksay, for all his hard work in this area. Details of how this can be implemented are outlined in the bill.

I would also like to thank Anna Kirkpatrick and others from Conscience Canada who worked with me to fine-tune this bill.

Let us give peace a chance.

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

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by residents from all over Ontario concerned with the proposed mega-quarry in Melancthon Township in Dufferin County. This will be the largest open pit quarry in Canada, at over 2,300 acres. People are concerned that the mega-quarry threatens the Grand and Nottawasaga Rivers' watersheds, including various freshwater fish species.

They call upon the Government of Canada to conduct an environmental assessment under the authority of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act on the proposed Highland Companies' mega-quarry development.

KIDNEY RESEARCH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present two petitions.

The first petition is from residents of the Peterborough area who are very concerned that kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada. While real progress is being made in a variety of ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of bio-artificial kidneys, they call upon Parliament to make research funding available to the Canadian Institutes for Health Research for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension of the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the U.S.

● (1515)

HUMAN SMUGGLING

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition concerns the formerly named Bill C-4, which was the bill on preventing human smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system.

In this petition, signed by people in East Vancouver, the petitioners point out that this particular bill violates Canada's international obligations under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

They point out that smuggling is already punishable by life imprisonment or a fine up to \$1 million in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. They call on the Government of Canada to withdraw this bill.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very timely petition, given that the government introduced Bill C-18, which is going to kill the Canadian Wheat Board. This petition is signed by many prairie farmers calling upon the government to respect the wishes of a majority of farmers. We all know that the majority of prairie grain wheat farmers want to retain the Canadian Wheat Board.

It is with pleasure that I submit this particular petition, which is very timely, and would ask all government members to pay attention to what a majority of grain farmers are saying in the Prairies.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition which has been submitted by residents of Vancouver. It is a petition dealing with the right to housing, specifically noting that the right to proper housing is within Canada's commitments under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and pointing to solutions that have been developed.

This petition specifically references the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' proposals for a plan on housing and homelessness. It calls on the federal government not only to have a national affordable housing program but to make some very significant changes to our tax structure to allow those who are investors and builders to get a tax benefit from building more rental housing.

I am very honoured to present this petition. I know there are people at the city level who will be working very hard. We need to join with them at the federal level.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a number of folks from Trail, Montrose, Fruitvale and Rossland are really concerned about child pornography and child exploitation. The petitioners state that statistics show that 39% of those who possess child sex abuse materials have images of children between the ages of three and five and 83% have images of children between the ages of 6 and 12 being sexually assaulted.

Section 163 of the Criminal Code currently allows sentencing of as little as 90 days for making criminal child sex material and 14 days for the possession of criminal sex materials. They request that Parliament speedily enact legislation to change this illegal terminology in section 163 from child pornography to child sex abuse materials, and enact strong and mandatory minimum sentences to protect children, provide justice and deter pedophilia.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition regarding chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, or CCSVI.

Over 15,000 procedures have now been performed in over 60 countries. While the government has announced requests for proposals for phase I or II clinical trials, angioplasty is a standard of care practice in North America. The United States already has three phase II clinical trials being undertaken.

S.O. 52

The petitioners are calling on the Minister of Health to consult experts actively engaged in diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI, to undertake phase III clinical trials on an urgent basis with a large patient participation in multiple centres across Canada, and to require follow-up care.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

● (1520)

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

THE ENVIRONMENT

The Speaker: The Chair has a request for an emergency debate on the same subject by two different members. I will hear the member for Etobicoke North first and then the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask for an emergency debate regarding federal leadership on our international obligations with respect to climate change.

As the world's nations, which have committed to action on climate change, begin meeting for COP 17 in Durban today to negotiate a fair, ambitious and binding deal to address global climate change, our own government is threatening to eschew its international obligations.

The latest round of negotiations is particularly important because the existing framework expires next year and the window to keep climate change to the 2°C limit, a threshold associated with dangerous climate change, is fast approaching.

I therefore request an emergency debate to ask the government to show leadership by providing a clear plan to demonstrate how it will meet its 2020 greenhouse gas emission targets, reversing any climate change and ozone monitoring cuts at Environment Canada, and taking a leadership role in negotiating in good faith at Durban.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, while our requests to adjourn for an emergency debate are in the same subject area, they are slightly different.

Government Orders

I am requesting an emergency debate on a specific and important matter regarding urgent consideration. It is specifically in reference to Canada's negotiating position at COP 17 taking place and opening today in Durban, South Africa.

In this House, we have not had an opportunity to debate, and as I laid out in my letter to you, Mr. Speaker, we have been denied positions within the official delegation, which means no opposition members of Parliament will be capable of advising our government as it goes forward in negotiations.

I did put a question to the hon. government House leader on Thursday as to whether there would be an opportunity to debate climate change in the very narrow window we have to influence the Canadian government, that being the time before the hon. Minister of the Environment himself leaves to go to Durban to lead our delegation in those negotiations.

This is very urgent. It is very specific. If there were ever a time for an emergency debate in this House, it would be on this issue on this day when we have also just learned through the media that there is an intention from the government, without having consulted the House, to actually withdraw from our legal commitments.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, with the number of precedents which I have cited for you, that your discretion be exercised toward allowing the members of Parliament in the House of Commons, here present, to have an opportunity to debate the urgent issue of our negotiating position going toward COP 17.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I appreciate the fact that there may have been a slight difference in the request for emergency debate. The main thrust of the subject matter was in the same general context, so that is why I chose to treat the requests at the same time.

I regret to inform the members that I do not think it meets the very high threshold established for granting emergency debates at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

MARKETING FREEDOM FOR GRAIN FARMERS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, An Act to reorganize the Canadian Wheat Board and to make consequential and related amendments to certain Acts be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary has three minutes left to conclude her speech.

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will quickly summarize what I began my speech with, which was the great benefits that the farmers and the producers in my riding and throughout the province of Manitoba will receive once Bill C-18 is passed and they have true marketing freedom in order to market their wheat.

I also couple that with the fact that all of us want to see a successful Canadian Wheat Board, a voluntary wheat board. We want to see it maintained and be successful. We think that we can have a successful wheat board as well as marketing freedom for Canadian western wheat farmers.

I was also giving some quotes from some of the farmers in my riding, who indicated their support for us giving them freedom and choice. I want to quote Lorne Hulme. He is from Hulme Agra Products, which is in MacGregor, Manitoba, a great little community in my riding. This is what Lorne said:

I should have the right to decide what to do with my grain. Not to be dictated to by people who have little or no involvement in western Canadian agriculture...I strongly encourage you to continue on your path to assure that each farmer in western Canada has the right to market his/her grain as they see fit.

Then he thanks us all for our efforts and encourages us to not give up. I am pleased that we have not given up on this and we will be ensuring marketing freedom for western Canadian farmers.

I did receive correspondence, emails and phone calls, and I had discussions with individuals in my riding who wanted to keep the monopoly. They were concerned that the Wheat Board would fail if a monopoly was not intact. Therefore, about three years ago I met with members of the board of directors from the Canadian Wheat Board in my office. At the time I told these individuals that as leaders they needed to see that progress could not be stopped. Progress can never be stopped in a democratic and free nation.

Individual farmers and farmers groups were asking for marketing freedom, so my message to those members of the board of directors was for us to work together to have a win-win scenario where we can have a viable wheat board which is voluntary and also marketing freedom for farmers.

Unfortunately, their message to me was that they got up and walked out of the room and said they would not be party to that, that they did not want to see that happen.

I can say that the opposite was true when I would talk to farmers who wanted freedom. None of them were interested in destroying the board. They still wanted to see the board viable. They just wanted their own freedom and options. Therefore, it is very disappointing to see some of the approaches that have been taken by certain supporters of the monopoly and specifically some of the board members.

Can a board survive without a monopoly? Absolutely. We see it each and every day. We see it in the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan where voluntary pools and marketing boards are successful.

I met last week with members of Peak of the Market, which is a very successful voluntary board, who market their potatoes and other vegetables.

That is the example we need to follow in this debate as well as with respect to the issue of marketing freedom. We need to give individual farmers the ability to market their grain. At the same time, we need to see a voluntary wheat board with a new attitude, maybe some new blood, maybe new ideas, and maybe a board of directors who do not want the Wheat Board destroyed, but truly want to see it successful for those farmers who choose to use it.

Government Orders

I urge all members to support the bill.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague. I found it funny that, in the last three minutes of her speech, she talked about farmers having the right to choose what to do with their grain, even though this government is not even allowing them to decide what to do with the Canadian Wheat Board. So, that is the first question. Do farmers not have the right to decide whether to keep or abolish this board? The government made that decision without consulting them.

Does she plan to hold a referendum to really know, once and for all, what farmers want to do with the board and with their grain?

[*English*]

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Mr. Speaker, I would be very happy to take the member to my riding and have him visit some farms where individuals are growing not just wheat or durum, but all kinds of other crops that they are marketing freely. As I mentioned, Peak of the Market is a voluntary vegetable marketing board. The beauty of this bill is that the Canadian Wheat Board will still be in existence but it will be a voluntary board. Individuals can absolutely choose to be part of that board and to market their wheat through the Canadian Wheat Board, but those who choose not to can go another way.

The beauty of our country is the freedoms that we all share and we take for granted. I am not sure if the hon. member represents farmers but he should try to understand the restraints and the ball and chain that has been put on western Canadian wheat farmers because of this mandatory Wheat Board and its monopoly.

We have seen farmers go to jail because of this. We have seen farmers abandon the whole wheat industry. We have seen many value added industries go to the U.S. or not be here in Canada. This is a good bill because it is a balance.

We do not want to destroy the Wheat Board. We want to see the wheat board be voluntary and viable, but we want individual farmers to have the rights that they deserve as Canadians.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not agree at all with my colleague's comments, and she is well aware of that.

I have a very genuine and sincere question to ask. I am not looking for pre-fab lines that have been prepared. Where does the member stand with respect to supply management? She keeps talking about freedom for farmers. Surely that must include freedom for dairy farmers, egg farmers and poultry farmers. Could she tell us where she stands on supply management?

• (1530)

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question because I am also very proud to represent dairy farmers in my riding. I am not sure if my hon. colleague represents dairy farmers. I do represent dairy farmers, as well as grain and livestock farmers. My dairy farmers are very happy with the way supply management is working. It is a successful program that our government supports.

The member opposite needs to be honest about something. As I said to the Canadian Wheat Board members three years ago, we

cannot stop progress. When young, innovative farmers are saying that they want to be set free from a monopoly and a wheat board that they do not want to be a part of, it is our responsibility to lead the way. Many times, the people we represent are far ahead of us on a lot of these issues. We just need to open up our eyes and lead the way on issues like this.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to expand on what this means for value added on the Prairies. For us in Saskatchewan, Regina and the area, will benefit very much from a brand new processing plant that has investors who will be making major investments. I would like the member to expand on value added.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Mr. Speaker, across Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, across western Canada, farmers are excited and getting ready for this change because there are so many new innovative ways that they can add value. We will be seeing new plants springing up across our provinces. We will see jobs created and more value added for our agricultural industry.

It is time to get on board. The opposition somehow seems to think that when there is a free market it will mean cheaper grain. That has to be the most irresponsible logic I have ever heard. We live in a country where we have commodities, where we sell our products, then add value to it and we sell the product here in Canada. It is good business and our farmers are some of the best business people in the country.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

It is with a great deal of sadness that I rise to speak to Bill C-18 today. Ever since I was elected in 2006, we on this side of the House have done all in our power to prevent this reckless dismantling of farmer control by the Conservatives.

This past weekend, I had the privilege of attending the National Farmers Union convention in London, Ontario. There, I saw many farmers, both young and old, who believe that the government is on a disaster course. In his speech to the delegates, the chairman of the CWB, Allen Oberg, raised a number of interesting issues, such as with the firing of elected directors, the government effectively takes control of this farmer controlled institution. This is obviously a blatant example of the further erosion of farmer influence on agriculture in our country. According to Mr. Oberg, the factors driving the Conservative agenda are, in order of their importance: ideology, industry, U.S. and European farmers, and lastly, the interests of Canadian farmers.

Government Orders

Clearly, the interests of the big corporations and farmers are not the same. The main objective of these companies is to increase profits by increasing the margin made from individual farmers. It is, therefore, difficult to see why this small group of farmers against the single desk does not understand it. They believe that somehow they will be able to compete and obtain a premium price from the very companies that wish to maximize profit.

We must not forget that all profits generated today by the CWB, some \$530 million to \$655 million annually, go back to farmers. The value of the Canadian Wheat Board mechanism for direct farmer influence on the marketing agency cannot be overstated. The small and medium sized wheat and barley farmers have an agency that provides a level of service that neither single nor even a small co-operative of even the largest wheat and barley farmers in western Canada could emulate.

The CWB has both the trust of the buyer and the seller. It ensures that the product is delivered with consistent quality, on time and to the scale required, while it connects with markets to negotiate the best price and to guarantee farmer payment.

With the loss of the single desk, this capacity will be gone. No longer will the CWB be able to put farmers first against the railway monopolies, provide a strategic advantage to ship from Churchill, protect against WTO harassment and maintain producer cars, fight against GM wheat or maintain a quality reputation in the world.

A very disturbing article appeared in the *Leader Post* on November 26. It mentioned that, under direct orders from the minister, the CWB's contingency fund was raised from \$60 million to \$200 million. The author of the article, Bruce Johnstone, said that this did not "have anything to do with putting more money in farmers' pockets". He went on to say:

In fact, farmers are going to help bankroll the Tories' new voluntary wheat board whether they want to or not.

[The]...government wants to use the contingency fund to cover the costs of operating the new wheat pool company and wind up the old farmer-directed board, including severance payments for CWB officials.

These wind-up costs are estimated to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, including liability costs of breaking or renegotiating contracts, obligations, pensions, severance payments and other asset purchases. Allen Oberg estimates this to be between \$200 million and \$400 million. In other words, money will be taken from farmers to advance the government's agenda so it can ram this through.

This does not make any sense and, I would submit, it is morally wrong. Shame on the Prime Minister and shame on his corporate stooges.

We need to look at the cost factor of this massive, tragic transformation. Most analysts predict that grain prices will fall after the elimination of the single desk. Another likely outcome is industry consolidation as large producers squeeze out smaller producers. Large grain companies, such as Viterra, Cargill and Bunge, will have a huge new supply of sellers competing to unload their products.

In Australia, with the loss of the single desk, the market share of the Australian wheat board collapsed to 23% of Australian exports, as its reputation for quality is being lost.

●(1535)

The CWB grains account for 95% of shipments through the Port of Churchill. This does not cost the government any money at all but the government is now proposing to provide \$5 million of taxpayer money per year for five years to support the shipping of grain.

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers, the CWB contributes a gross output of \$94.6 million to the city of Winnipeg. The employment spinoff from the CWB is 2,000 jobs, with a total labour income impact on the city of more than \$66 million and, at the provincial level, \$140 million.

What is tragic is that there has not been an economic analysis by the Conservatives of this legislation. Based on analysis of the situation on the open market, it can be expected that there will be a reduction of between 16% to 23% on return to farmers and losses in the millions related to payment defaults and arbitrary reductions by grain companies.

Today, the CWB earn farmers between \$500 million and \$655 million every year. No one will be able to influence any of the big five grain companies that will take over. There will be no pooling of premiums. These will go directly to the company, which does not guarantee payment to farmers for all grains delivered.

In the past, the CWB has also assisted farmers in legal challenges, such as the lawsuit against CP Rail. There is no credible evidence that any single farmer on the prairies has the resources to do any of this. Based on historical precedence, there will be losses in the millions of dollars per year to farmers on demurrage charges, as well as freight rate overcharges. There is also credible evidence that the farmer-loaded producer car option will end. This will result in a direct loss to the farmer of between \$1,000 and \$1,500 per year.

This is a black day in the history of our country. Whether we are dealing with the issue of crime in this country or the collective interests of farmers, we have a Conservative government, elected with only 27% of the vote of eligible voters, that is determined to transform this country based on an ideology and not on sound analysis or research.

Farmers in western Canada have spent many years building an organization that provides them clout in dealing with their trading partners and transnational corporations at no cost to the taxpayers. In their wisdom, through the election of their directors in the recent plebiscite, they have chosen to retain a strong, collective, united front through a single desk.

Government Orders

What we are seeing here is a battle of ideologies. The co-operative position of strength versus this rugged, every person for himself individualism. Some will survive but many will not. The tragedy is that this ideological agenda will further erode the family farm and the quality of our western Canadian rural life. Unfortunately, there will be no turning back once farmers' rights and powers are taken away.

In closing, we could say that history will be the judge as we see the dismantling, and it is a dismantling. The evidence and the research that I have read and we have seen on this side of the House is that a single desk entity will not be able to survive in today's ruthless market when we have the United States, through the WTO, unsuccessfully challenging the Wheat Board 13 times, but this organization has been able to stand up on behalf of farmers.

We will see in a few years what will happen. Those of us on this side believe that this is not a happy day and it is not as exciting as many on the other side think that it will be.

● (1540)

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about the shipping through Churchill. The Wheat Board bought some ships, on which the farmers had no say, and those ships do not go to Churchill. They use the lake head. The farmers paid for that.

He talked about severance packages. That is part of the reason that perhaps the costs will be higher for this voluntary wheat board.

However, there were times that the Wheat Board made some decisions that did not reflect the farmers. I can think of a Christmas three or four years ago when the Wheat Board gave those who were working in Winnipeg stress leave. It gave \$500 per worker in Winnipeg for stress leave but nobody paid the farmers for the stress they had in ensuring their grain got to market.

When the member talks about unfairness, the farmers did not have a voice in some of the decisions that were made, for example, the buying of the ships. I would like the member to expand on that.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, as in other farmer control organizations, a board of directors is elected. If I am not mistaken, the member mentioned the stress leave that was granted. After that, farmers elected most of the members who support the single desk. Therefore, the democratic right was exercised within the farming community to elect directors who represented their views in a free and democratic process.

Why is it not possible then for the government to have this democratic process take place so that farmers can decide for themselves whether they want to go down this route or whether they would like to continue to retain a single desk?

The problem is that there has not been a democratic vote. During the election the minister stated that farmers would have a voice, but this has not happened.

There is something quite wrong here: a farmer-based organization making decisions through its elected board of directors versus a government decision that is being rammed through in legislation.

● (1545)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of working with the member while we fought against the government over the last four or five years to prevent it from destroying the Canadian Wheat Board, which seems to be what it wants.

The Minister of State for Western Diversification got up a moment ago and talked about stress leave bonuses for the people who worked at the Canadian Wheat Board. Of course, they were stressed because they were always under attack. The government is using its position to provide misinformation consistently on the Wheat Board and its operations.

If the member wants to talk about bonuses, look at the bonuses for the senior bureaucracy in the Government of Canada. What the Wheat Board paid out would not have a patch on that.

We have heard in the House member after member on the government side get up and talk about value-added processing. The facts are, and I think the member knows it, that Canada processes three times more malting barley per capita than the United States. Wheat milling capacity in western Canada has grown by 11.8% in the last decade compared to 9% in the northern states of the United States. There were four new western Canadian mills built during that period while the number of mills in the northern United States has remained the same.

On the value added by the government, what is really going to happen here is that farmers are going to have to sell their grain more cheaply and take greater losses in their operations so that it adds value to somebody else's end profits. Is that not what is really happening? Is the government supporting the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is anybody in the House who understands farmers more than my colleague does. He has been working on behalf of farmers for many years, whether through the National Farmers Union or right here in the House.

There is misinformation. There is a spin that somehow there is not enough value added because of the single desk. The member just stated that there is value added, there are new mills and capacity is increasing, whereas across the border this is not happening.

The member is entirely correct. Once this is thrown open, obviously people will not open up new plants unless they can get a cheaper price. The only way they could get a cheaper price is if farmers get less. It is a simple matter of economics.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we want to talk some more about Bill C-18 and about Canadian institutions; the Canadian Wheat Board is an important one. In Bill C-18, we can clearly see the government's desire to destroy another Canadian institution to the advantage of private corporations, which are very often foreign-owned.

Let us speak clearly about the dangers to all the institutions affected by Bill C-18, because, in destroying the Canadian Wheat Board, the Conservatives are also attacking a whole range of Canadian institutions.

The first of those institutions is democracy, this country's most important value. It is the right of farmers themselves to manage the board that markets the fruits of their labour. It is essential. On this issue, the government offers a very special interpretation of the concept of freedom for farmers, which also involves the existence of the right to vote on the choice of who they want as partners to sell their wheat. The right to a referendum is their most sacred right. But, in fact, they are being denied such a referendum. It was promised to them during the election, but once the election was over, it was obvious that the Conservative government wanted so much to destroy a Canadian institution that it forgot to honour its big promise. The Conservatives wanted people to vote for them on the basis that they would protect, respect and consult farmers. But once they were in power, the only people consulted were foreign corporations. That is typical of the Conservative government—a Conservative government, not a Canadian government.

Second, the Canadian Wheat Board is also a world headquarters, located here in Canada. Decisions that matter to the world are made here in Canada. The Wheat Board has developed its staff and expertise in Canada. The Conservatives would replace it with offices that receive faxes, emails and orders from foreign corporations located elsewhere. We are going to lose a national resource. For the world, it has been an institution whose words were listened to, one that could intervene in global markets and affect prices and market trends around the world. It is being replaced by nothing at all. That is a major impact. The Canadian Wheat Board generated 2,000 jobs in the city of Winnipeg. But the Conservative government has so little respect that it has not even considered what would become of this world headquarters.

The Canadian Wheat Board is also a provider of transportation. It owns railcars. It even owns ships. It is being criticized for owning ships and other means of transport by those who have never considered that having railcars and ships has enabled Canada to reduce transportation costs and therefore get a better price for its wheat. No, they have not done that analysis. They do not want to. They simply say that the Canadian Wheat Board has ships and should not have them. Personally, I do not agree, because I think it should own ships. If the board decides that having ships gives Canadian farmers an economic advantage, then why give up that advantage? To please the competition? To please the Conservative government's limited vision? I say no.

And if other Canadian companies were to follow this example, we could finally have a Canadian merchant marine. But that would be something truly Canadian, and we know that this government is

attacking all the important symbols of Canada, except the flag and the Queen's portrait. It is important and creates many jobs but, once again, they are not worried about these issues.

The Port of Churchill was developed to provide access to the north, to give direct access to all world markets through a deep sea port, and to be able to take advantage of the opening of the Northwest Passage through the Arctic. But again, Churchill is Canadian and that is less attractive than revitalizing the railroads in the United States, because they will use this economic sleight of hand to increase their share of transportation.

● (1550)

It is profitable for them, but it may not be for Canada, and certainly not for Churchill. We have invested in Churchill, a Canadian city and port inhabited by Canadians who deserve to be listened to and supported by a government that, unfortunately, is anything but Canadian. That is a major problem.

The issue is not just the Port of Churchill, but also the Port of Vancouver, the seaway and the Port of Thunder Bay—all these institutions and all this infrastructure. The Canadian workers who work in these places are not being listened to or considered. There has not even been a study on the impact this will have on them. All we have heard are slogans and unflattering remarks. All we have seen is the government's demonstration that it does not know what it is doing and that it wants to destroy Canada in a fit of hysterics.

In conclusion, the serious problem with this bill is that its very essence is anti-Canadian. It destroys an expertise and will make our country's institutions obsolete. Our country is vast, it is big and it depends on a number of institutions that helped build it. The Canadian Wheat Board plays an essential role, since it uses Canada's railways and railway cars—Canada's means of transportation. The Canadian Wheat Board helped build this country. It is not the only one, but it is important, just like the CBC, which the government is also trying to destroy. It wants to support Mr. Péladeau. The government is going after another Canadian institution. The government wants to destroy it and replace it with something else. Those things are never Canadian and never defend the interests of Canadians. That is a major problem with this government.

The government systematically shows up with nothing but lies, nothing but fabrications. When we ask the Conservatives for an assessment of how their suggested alternative will affect the economy, they never give anything. It would be nice to have economic studies on the impact this would have on the Port of Churchill, the St. Lawrence Seaway or the Port of Vancouver, but the government never has that. All it has are comments, such as the fact that it gave out \$500 for stress leave. What does that change?

With regard to wheat trading by American companies, do you know what premiums, commissions, perks or gifts are given? Do you really believe that these people will trade Canadian wheat because they like us and want to help out Canadians? They are there to make money. The more they can make off us, the happier they will be and the less they will hesitate, especially with a government that is encouraging them, a government that is telling them to take everything and give nothing in return.

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That is the problem with this government. It does not defend the interests of Canadians and time and again is nowhere in sight when it comes time to defend Canada. There is nothing Canadian about this Conservative government. When referring to the current Conservative government we cannot call it the Canadian government. The Canadian Wheat Board is a fine example of this.

We could also discuss the impact this will have on co-operatives. It is the same problem, not just with co-operatives, but also with supply markets. The Conservatives consider them to be constraints on free and open trade.

I will conclude by saying that this government, with its anti-Canadian practices and its way of destroying all Canadian institutions, has proven that it has no heart.

● (1555)

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very troubled by the hon. member's comments. No criticism against the individual, but I wish he would have actually researched what he was talking about because there were so many misconceptions in what he was saying.

The member talked about foreign companies. My question when I get to the end of this will be, where is the headquarters of Viterra, one of the largest grain companies in the world? Where is the headquarters of Richardson International?

I would like to leave it with those two questions, but the hon. member also talked about ships. This government actually said to the Canadian Wheat Board that it is not within the Wheat Board's mandate to own ships, trains or railroads. It has made such a mess that we want to make sure it keeps out of the transportation industry. The member suggested that the Canadian Wheat Board manage producer cars. I managed my own producer cars. I did not need the Canadian Wheat Board to do that.

Is Richardson International headquartered in Calgary or Winnipeg? Is Viterra headquartered in Regina or Calgary? They are Canadian companies. I would ask the member to please get that accurate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to reply to the Conservative member who is obviously deliberately turning a blind eye. The Canadian Wheat Board is not simply a place where faxes from parent companies in New York, Chicago or Los Angeles are received. It is where decisions are made. And those decisions are made by members elected by farmers. That is what bothers the Conservatives: Canadians making decisions for Canadians. That is unacceptable to them, which is why they refuse to hold a referendum for farmers. They are afraid of what the farmers might decide.

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about how big Viterra was.

I will put it on the record right now. I remember when the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool thought it was big too, and where is it today? It is gone. The difference will be that Viterra will find itself under the same kind of pressure, because although pools worked for

the farm community and profits went back to the farm, with Viterra the profits go back to the shareholders.

The fact is that it does not matter whether it is Viterra, Cargill or Archer Daniels Midland. The Canadian Wheat Board ensured that the maximum return went back to primary producers; Viterra, Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland will ensure that they gain at farmers' expense in order to provide returns to shareholders.

The United States has challenged the Canadian Wheat Board 14 times, and Canada won every time. Who does the member think the minister is working for? Is he working for the American grain sector? It seems to be only the minister who wants to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board. Challenges from the U.S. could not get rid of it.

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, who is the minister working for? Clearly he is not working for Canadians. He is working for his own personal future. If he respects farmers so much then why will he not let them have a referendum? This is so typical. He says that he represents and defends farmers, but when they ask him to poll their opinion, he is not there for them. He is not the Minister of Agriculture, nor the minister of farmers. He is his own farmer and he is negotiating his future job, nothing more. He is not a Canadian member of Parliament. He is a man who defends anti-Canadian interests.

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand for the first time to speak at third reading on this piece of legislation. However, it is very frustrating to listen to some of the statements. I am not too sure how to phrase this, but I find it very frustrating because we cannot explain why people are making statements that they know are not factual. That is about as far as I can go in parliamentary language.

The Canadian Wheat Board is not like the CBC and is not likened to a whole lot of the arguments, so let us stay on the issue. This piece of legislation, the marketing freedom for grain farmers act, would provide the same freedom to western farmers that farmers in the rest of Canada have. It is nothing more complicated than that. It is simply an opportunity for western farmers to be able to choose, in the same way that an automobile manufacturer can choose where it markets its cars. Farmers growing peas in Saskatchewan can choose where they market their peas and farmers who produce apples in the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia can choose where they market their apples. It is no more complex than that. It is something that I personally have been looking forward to for over 35 years. I cannot explain how excited I am to see this happen, and happen here today.

Mr. Speaker, I seek your approval to share my time with the member for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre. I would like to keep going for 20 minutes, but that hon. member wishes to speak as well, so I ask you to allow that, Mr. Speaker.

Government Orders

The new Canadian wheat board would be voluntary. The present-day directors had a great opportunity to actually move forward with an option that they know full well most farmers wanted to see, because those same farmers actually have a voluntary method of selling all of their other products. It is nothing new to those farmers. It is simply a choice that is necessary for us, as farmers, to be able to hedge our risks.

We carry all of the risk on a crop that is put in the ground in the spring. We carry every penny of risk on that. Whether it is weather risk, market risk, whatever it may be, we carry that risk, but we have no way of actually guaranteeing that risk. I can for my other crops, for peas or for lentils. I can hedge a price on those crops and lock in a price in the future. It is very simple for those crops. I would encourage all hon. members to recognize that other farmers have this right and that farmers west of the Manitoba-Ontario border do not.

We are quite looking forward to the opportunities in value-added operations. We have heard many times in speeches in this House about the new pasta plant going up just outside Regina.

I would refer anyone who has travelled south on I-15 down into the United States from Alberta to the massive malt plant that should have been in Alberta, and would have been, had the Canadian Wheat Board had not said it would refuse to sell barley to that plant if it were to be built in Alberta. I have no idea why. The fact is that there is a large malt plant; the barley now goes down Highway 2, right past my farm and down to Montana, and we do not see any of the benefits or the jobs. The benefits are going to the Americans employed in that facility.

Let us look at canola. I have had farmers call my office and ask, "Why are you trying to get rid of the monopoly Canadian Wheat Board?" My answer starts out with one word: canola.

• (1605)

Farmers in this country used to grow oilseed rape or rapeseed. When it was taken out of the Canadian Wheat Board, the plant scientists took it, expanded the opportunities, increased the trade potential of it and increased the oil content of it. It was the Cinderella crop of Canada. The acreage has grown exponentially.

Canada is known for its canola. Unfortunately, it is not known for its wheat. Because we have kept the Canadian Wheat Board in place for so long, it has stifled any potential and trait-specific qualities that could have come forward to expand our acreage on wheat. The wheat acreages have diminished. However, going forward I look forward to a vibrant industry around wheat and durum in this country.

I will refer also to feed barley. Feed barley used to be under the control of the Canadian Wheat Board. When it was removed, we actually developed a feeding industry in Alberta, partially because we got rid of the Crow subsidy but also because we had an opportunity to value-add to barley. It is called cattle. That is where Alberta beef comes from. Everyone in the House knows how wonderful our Alberta beef is, even the members from Saskatchewan.

We watched canola and corn yields increase. We have watched acreages go up. The last time I spoke in the House, I spoke to the fact that Canada will be called on to feed a growing population. We need

to take advantage of these new crops to be allowed to contribute to feeding the rest of the world. It is a great opportunity.

I would like to talk about many things before I run out of time, but one thing is near and dear to my heart. I want to pay tribute to some of the individuals who have virtually worked all their lives to see this day. Some of them are not with us.

I think of Clare Taylor, who farmed just outside Regina. He was an incredible gentleman. One could not find a finer gentleman. He had a white shock of hair that most men would be jealous of when they were 18. He had it the day he died. However, he never had the freedom to market his own wheat. One day he said to me, "I hope you live long enough and I hope I live long enough to see the freedom to market our wheat." Unfortunately, he did not make it.

Another gentleman is Art Mainil. Art's nephew, Dale, is with us in Ottawa today cheering us on—silently, of course, in the gallery, but cheering us on. Art Mainil fought hard and long to have the freedom to market his wheat where he chose.

Another gentleman is Wally Nelson, one of the founding board members of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, an incredibly dedicated man. Along with Clare Taylor, they were two gentlemen who finally made sure that farmers actually got paid for the protein content in their wheat, because the Canadian Wheat Board never recognized that for years and years. It was a tough battle just to get that.

Another gentleman is Jim Chatenay, one of the first elected members to the Canadian Wheat Board. He was a very articulate gentleman who worked long and hard to try to gain us freedom. Unfortunately, he sat on that board for enough years that it retired him, and he did not quite accomplish it.

Hubert Esquirol, from Meota, Saskatchewan, is another good friend of mine who worked with the wheat growers trying to get marketing freedom.

I will also mention Glen Goertzen, from Alberta; Ike Lanier, from Lethbridge; Bill Cooper, who I believe will be here to celebrate with us this evening; and Paul Orsak from Manitoba.

Unfortunately, Art Walde is no longer with us either. He fought the battle. He did not lose it; we will win it for him today, and his son Robyn will be with us to celebrate tonight.

There are also Tim Harvie and Brian Kriz, and another person we should recognize is a former member of the House, the Honourable Charlie Mayer. He managed to get oats outside the Canadian Wheat Board. We will never forget him for doing that.

Mr. Speaker, I see that I am running out of time. I was just about to get to some of the points that I would like to reflect on, points on how the board actually lost me money over the years, but I will share that with you sometime over a glass of wine.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of State for Finance.

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Earlier, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture was asked whether there were any studies to back their initiatives and their bill. The same question was asked about other bills, and the Conservatives have failed to produce any studies to back their plans a number of times now. Often they tell us that their constituents said this or that, or that they met someone who told them this or that, so they created a bill and are moving ahead with it.

I would like to know whether the Minister of State for Finance has any studies to back this initiative and whether there is anything to truly prove that this will be beneficial to western Canadian farmers.

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, a study went on for 35 years of my life. It was called a “reality check”. I would hate to add up how much money I lost. Let me reflect just one experience, and this is a good case study.

One year, on my farm we harvested some of the best wheat that Canada could produce. I could have delivered it to Shelby, Montana for \$1.35 a bushel more than I would get but I could not because that was illegal. I would have ended up in jail. I could have delivered it right off the combine and got \$1.35 a bushel more. I probably had somewhere in the neighbourhood of 80,000 bushels that year, so do the math.

I ended up selling it to the Canadian Wheat Board. It took 18 months to finally get the cheque. If I had delivered it in Shelby, I would have had the cheque in my hand as I drove out of the elevator. I lost \$1.35 a bushel and I waited 18 months to get my money. What more case study do we need than that?

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague points out that there are some farmers who want to do away with the single desk Canadian Wheat Board. We know that. There are also farmers who would like to keep it. There was a survey. Unfortunately, we do not know what the real numbers are. They seem to be in majority with respect to wheat and a slight majority with respect to barley, but we never did have that plebiscite, so we do not know for sure.

One thing for sure is the government has never, at any time, come across with constructive and reassuring language to those farmers out west who believe that it is important to keep the Canadian Wheat Board single desk. Basically, those farmers have been ridiculed for not wanting to change the way the government wants them to change.

Does my hon. colleague have any reassuring words to give to those farmers who are genuinely concerned about the fact that the Canadian Wheat Board will no longer be a single desk? They believe in that and so far the government has not tried to send any reassuring and comforting words that everything is going to be okay.

• (1615)

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, that is not accurate. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food approached the Canadian Wheat Board and ask if it would please make the plans to put in place a voluntary wheat board.

When oats was taken out, there was no such thing but guess what happened with oats. The acreage grew, the volumes grew and it is a wonderful market. Guess what happened when canola was taken out.

The acreage grew, the productivity grew and it is a world-class product now.

The same can happen with wheat. I could not name one farmer who has not grown something other than wheat. Therefore, farmers have the ability and understand how to market their grain, but they have been bound under this monopoly so they could not sell their wheat or barley. All farmers out there have the opportunity to market their other products and they have actually understood how to do that. Therefore, it is nothing new. If the present board had actually done what it was asked and what its fiduciary responsibility was to do, we would have a new board ready to set up an option and it would have worked wonderfully for them, just as for those who want their freedom.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me start off by saying hallelujah, marketing freedom is merely hours away.

There have been producers in the country, and many of them are going to be with us tonight, who have been waiting for decades upon decades to achieve the fundamental right of freedom that every other Canadian takes for granted in our great country. However, after years of inactivity and opposition from parties on the left, we have finally come to the point that in less than three hours from now Bill C-18 will pass third reading in the House and will be sent to the Senate to achieve the marketing freedom that so many producers in western Canada have fought for all of their lives.

This will be an historic vote. This will be a celebration of unparalleled heights because we have farmers, and my colleague, the hon. Minister of State for Finance has named many of them, who have fought for years to achieve the same basic rights of freedom that other farmers in other parts of the country and in other parts of the world have taken for granted for years and years.

Unfortunately, the debate on Bill C-18, the debate on marketing freedom, has been jaundiced because there have been so many misrepresentations about what Bill C-18 will do. Instead of trying to get into some technical arguments, I will put the Bill C-18 question the easiest way that any Canadian can understand a bill like this. That is the test of common sense.

Without questions, western Canadian producers are among some of the smartest business people in Canada. If the Canadian Wheat Board were providing all the benefits to farmers that the opposition claims it does, there would be no need for this debate. There would be no need for Bill C-18 because there would not be a farmer in Canada who would want to change the Canadian Wheat Board, if the Wheat Board were doing what all of our opponents have say it does, and that is to provide unparalleled benefits to the farmers.

Unfortunately, western Canadian farmers know better. They know the Canadian Wheat Board does not provide them the benefits that my opponents purport it to do. Quite frankly, it costs farmers money. My colleague, the Minister of State for Finance, gave a couple of examples. Let me also give one.

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A constituent of mine, who will be here tonight, about three or four years ago wanted to sell his own barley. At that time, as members who have been around the House for awhile will remember, we attempted in 2006 to remove barley from the Canadian Wheat Board. It looked for a time that we would be able to achieve that. My constituent had a price locked in to sell his barley on the open market, but the opposition reared its protectionist head, refused that freedom to market his own barley and cost my constituent \$250,000.

I have heard the member for Malpeque and the member for Winnipeg Centre say on many occasions that the Wheat Board is the best thing going for western Canadian farmers, that if the Wheat Board were somehow changed or altered to remove the single desk provisions, the sky would fall and farmers would lose out on great opportunities. The constituent who lost \$250,000 will be here tonight. I would invite the member for Malpeque and the member for Winnipeg Centre to engage that constituent of mine in conversation and please, I would love to hear that conversation. I would love to hear how the member for Malpeque would say to my constituent that this was a good thing that happened, that losing a quarter of a million dollars was a good thing because we saved the Canadian Wheat Board. It makes no sense whatsoever and farmers know this intuitively.

• (1620)

We also have evidence, not just anecdotal evidence such as the story that I shared with members here, but we have empirical evidence. We have seen what happens when certain grains are removed from the Canadian Wheat Board.

Over 20 years ago, Charlie Mayer was successful in getting oats removed from the Canadian Wheat Board. What happened? Productivity went up and lo and behold, prices went up. Was there any great hue and cry from oat producers to have oats returned to the Canadian Wheat Board? Absolutely none, because the proof was in the pudding. Their productivity, acreage and prices went up. As a result of their oats not being controlled by the board, they were making more money than they did when they were controlled. There are similar stories with respect to canola, pulses and oilseeds. The benefit to farmers by giving them the ability to sell their own product is immense.

Some may argue, and I will accept their argument, that there are producers out there who want to remain selling through the board. They will have that opportunity. We are not getting rid of the single desk or the Wheat Board completely. We are merely making a voluntary marketing agency.

I hear time and time again misinformation coming from my colleagues opposite. They say that we are getting rid of the Wheat Board. We are not. We are simply turning it into a voluntary mechanism to allow producers to make their own choices. Some may want to continue selling their wheat and barley through the Canadian Wheat Board. They will have the ability to do so. We are simply giving producers the option and allowing them the freedom to make their own choices.

Since when is freedom a dirty word? According to the opposition it apparently is. According to the opposition, giving farmers the freedom to market their own product is something we should not

even be discussing. It makes no sense. It certainly does not pass the test of common sense because freedom is inalienable. It is a right of all Canadians.

Do we restrict other manufacturers or other businesses in Canada from selling their product to whom they wish? Outside of some legalities and some sort of health concerns, we do not.

My friend the heckler from Malpeque does not want to hear the truth. He merely wants to settle with the same ideological arguments. He comes from Prince Edward Island. I point out to him, as I have many times in the past, that I have yet to see the potato farmers of P.E.I. clamouring for a potato marketing agency. They never will because they now have the fundamental right as other producers in Canada—

• (1625)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member should get his information right. Potato producers did want a potato marketing commission in Prince Edward Island. They did get it. I will admit that a government took it away without a vote, just like what is being done here. However, for the member to stand and tell me that producers in Prince Edward Island did not want single desk selling at one point in time, they definitely did.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, the member for Malpeque is a former member of the National Farmers Union so we understand his motivation behind wanting to keep the Canadian Wheat Board untouched.

The reality is that freedom is a fundamental right for all Canadians. Western Canadian producers should not be any different than producers in other parts of the world.

This bill would, after decades of oppression, finally lift the yolk off the necks of western Canadian farm producers and allow them to make their own marketing choices. It would allow them to make their own business choices. It would allow them finally to experience the same freedoms, the fundamental rights, that other producers in other parts of the world have experienced for the last 70 years.

Tonight will be historic, and we are less than four hours away.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona, Aboriginal Affairs; the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, Asbestos Industry.

Many members today have made reference to people who are either here or will be here. I would caution all members that in this chamber members do not make reference to other members, whether they are or are not in the chamber. Similarly, members do not make reference to who is or is not in the gallery. Members in the gallery are also reminded that they are here as observers and that we will maintain order in this place in order to let the institution function.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

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Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary expressed a lot of passion for his points and the material he presented. Of course, there is a lot of passion on this side of the House as well. There seems to be a lot that members want to say on this issue.

Why is it that the government has forced closure? Why is it that we cannot have a good healthy debate, a good exchange of ideas and information in the House when we are dealing with such an important matter? It is an issue that the member has called historic and an issue that we on this side of the House feel extremely passionate about. Allowing a good healthy exchange and debate would be in the best interest of the Canadian Wheat Board. Why is it that the government is forcing closure on this? Could the hon. member comment on that?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, this debate has been going on for well over 20 years in this place. Western Canadian farmers know what our party stands for when it comes to giving freedom to western Canadian producers. This debate is not recent. The bill, although introduced recently, is not a new issue. This is an issue that has been at the forefront of western Canadian producers for generations. For my colleague to suggest that for some reason we are stifling debate, it is absolutely untrue. This debate has gone on long enough.

Our intentions have always been clear. We are acting on those intentions. We will get the job done and we will get it done tonight.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fragmented, the board loses its clout with the railways, grain companies and its clout in being price setters and not price takers.

Why does the member opposite, who has just made his remarks, ignore the comments of *The Economist* that said quite clearly that small farms will close and that small farming communities will be negatively affected, changing the face of western rural culture?

Why does he ignore the comments of *The Wall Street Journal* that said there will be many profits in Cargill and Viterra? At whose expense? At the expense of farmers because, suddenly, Cargill and Viterra will become the middle people. That does not exist right now because they have the Canadian Wheat Board as their sales and marketing agent.

Why does the member resist the comments of the Alliance Grain Traders? It stated that it will now be able to pay less for the grain. That is why it is setting up a pasta plant out west. Why does the member ignore those comments and, most important, why does he not allow farmers to vote under section 47.1 of the act if he is so darned convinced that this what farmers want?

• (1630)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, why does the member for Guelph ignore the fact that farmers are already marketing their own products outside of wheat and barley? Can the member for Guelph stand in his place and tell me the difference between marketing canola, pulses or other oilseeds and wheat and barley?

There is no difference. The ability that farmers have to market their own grain now has improved exponentially over the last 20 years. This is an age of almost instantaneous communication. There

is absolutely no difference in a producer's ability to market a canola crop, a cash crop, or to market wheat or barley.

The member talks about protecting farmers. Is it protecting farmers when farmers, like my colleague, the Minister of State for Finance, or my constituents lose hundreds of thousands of dollars because of government restrictions and its refusal to allow farmers to market their own product?

If he truly wants to stand up for the rights of farmers, he should join with us and support Bill C-18 tonight.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

I am happy to rise in the House today to speak to a most important issue. I must first begin by commenting that most of my constituents are absolutely shocked by the actions of the government. They are shocked by the level of debate or, should I say, lack of debate the government has engaged in.

We are in the early stages of a majority government and yet the government is fast tracking legislation that is proving to be completely reckless. This is not the only piece of legislation that it is fast tracking, and it is shameful on its part.

As responsible parliamentarians, we must ask a very important question: What is the rush? Why does the government continue to silence the elected political body? Is it because it is ashamed of its position in this debate? Is it because it knows it is engaging in activities that will destroy small rural communities? Is this why it is stopping Canadians from being heard?

We hear them laughing on the other side and showing signs of disgust as we speak, but for the Conservatives it is only about what they want to do and hear as opposed to what Canadians have to contribute to the debate.

I believe we have been sent to Parliament to represent the will of the electorate. However, in doing so, we are also charged with the responsibility to not only champion but maintain the sanctity of the traditions of the House of Commons. Unfortunately, we have not seen this. What have we seen instead? We have seen time allocation after time allocation. We have seen that the government is uninterested in the opinions of Canadians. These actions show how little respect the Conservatives have for this political institution.

Since its inception in the 1920s, the Canadian Wheat Board has been the pillar of Canadian farm life on the Prairies. In its early days, what we now call the Wheat Board consisted of individual owners of modest sized farms pooling their wheat together. Why did they do this? They did this to get a better price for their wheat. In 1943, this process was then formalized with the creation of the single desk. The result has been the financial stability needed to allow prairie farming communities to survive. The result has been the prudent risk management needed to ensure farmers and their families can avoid catastrophe. The result has been the ability for Canadian family farms to survive in an era of big agriculture.

Government Orders

•(1635)

[Translation]

Today, the Canadian Wheat Board sells high-quality Canadian wheat, harvested by hard-working Canadian farmers, to buyers around the world.

[English]

In total, 70 countries and roughly 21 million tonnes of wheat and barley are marketed by the Canadian Wheat Board each year. It is the largest and most successful grain marketing company in the world. Despite its large size and formidable status as a global marketer of wheat, I am proud to say that the Wheat Board is a farmer-controlled board, consisting of farmers elected by farmers.

What is to become of our Wheat Board? Unfortunately, the government wants to get rid of it. It wants to get rid of the financial stability it has given us for generations of Canadians. It wants to do away with the prudent risk management it has provided to our small rural prairie communities. On top of that, it wants to get rid of it against the express wishes of the farmers themselves.

We must not stop reminding my colleagues on the other side of the House of the Canadian Wheat Board's plebiscite back in September that told us that a strong majority of farmers want to maintain the Wheat Board. They want to maintain their ability to market wheat and barley through the single desk system. We must not stop reminding them of the 62% of respondents who voted in favour of retaining the single desk for wheat and the 51% who voted to maintain it for barley. We must not stop reminding them of the 38,261 farmers who submitted mail-in ballots in the plebiscite.

The government now has the responsibility to say directly to those 38,261 farmers who spoke out in a dignified democratic fashion that it does not care about their opinion. It should not be this way. We should not be shutting farmers out of this debate. We should not be telling them that their opinion does not matter. We should be listening to them. We should be asking them what they want us to do. This is a democracy, after all.

A responsible government would examine the truth of the matter. A responsible government would ask what will happen to our modest sized family farms, what will actually happen to the communities in which they live.

It would be only responsible for us to look at Australia. Australia recently eradicated its single desk system and the result was not pretty. We saw the price for its wheat go from \$99 per tonne over the price of American wheat to as low as \$27 per tonne below the price of American wheat. The Australian wheat market saw the destruction of its domestically-owned wheat industry. In just three years, Australia went from having 40,000 wheat farmers running their own wheat system, to being customers of Cargill, an American-owned giant in the industry. We are all familiar with the Cargills.

What a shame. What a shame that so many farmers had to lose their farms. What a shame that they lost their farms while big agriculture swoops in and purchases them when a farmer is desperate.

Why, then, is the government going down the same path? Why is it deliberately siding with big business over our family farms?

If anyone were to ask me, the matter is simple. I was sent here to listen to the demands of my constituents. I am here to listen to their concerns and to fight for their interests. I know that my constituents truly appreciate and value local food in their communities. They like to know that the family farm can exist and that they can know their local farmers who work so hard to provide food for the rest of us.

For example, I have here an email from one of my local farmers on Manitoulin Island in my riding of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking. She says, in referring to the Canadian Wheat Board, "This is one Board that was developed to assure fair prices to small farmers. We know that dismantling this Board will be difficult for farmers to get fair prices for their grains. We do not want food to be solely in the hands of the multinational corporations. Please let there be some room for the small farmers and for local food productions to survive".

•(1640)

Local growers form the backbone of the communities in many parts of my riding. I know they would join me in fighting tooth and nail against anything trying to destroy their culture and way of life.

Perhaps what makes us different from them is that we on this side of the House stand up for our family farms. We stand up for the hard-working Canadian family. We stand up for the modest-size prairie wheat producer. We listen to their wants. We demand that their voices be heard. We do not sell them out to big businesses like the Conservatives do.

I am afraid that the Conservatives are only telling us half of the story. They are not telling the whole truth. They are not warning of the dangers that may come to prairie communities when smaller farmers lose their farms. They do not tell of the financial strain that could result from smaller producers being thrust out on their own in the global market. They do not talk of the risk associated with this change for the modest-size producer.

Perhaps the Conservatives are correct in a sense in that they are giving our farmers more freedom. However, what they are doing is freeing our farmers from the protection that the single desk provides. They are giving them freedom from financial stability, freedom from proven risk management, freedom to be bullied and bought by big agriculture. They are now freed from a guaranteed decent price on the global market.

As my time for debate is up, I will speak to the rest of my points in a few minutes.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a correction to the member's point about the Wheat Board being formed by farmers helping farmers.

Government Orders

The Wheat Board marketing monopoly was established on October 12, 1943 when Canada was committed to providing inexpensive wheat to Britain as part of the war effort. The monopoly was established under the War Measures Act by Parliament, not by farmers for farmers. I would like her to check her facts on that.

I am sure if the Canadian Wheat Board does its work and wants to survive, it could invite her farmers to become part of the Canadian Wheat Board. No one is stopping that. All we want for our western Canadian farmers is to have the option that her farmers have. As to producing food in small communities, that is exactly what these farmers want. A pasta plant in Regina is being established for producing and processing food.

The member had best do some more homework on a couple of those points.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the input from my colleague, but as she is well aware, the Canadian Wheat Board is not taxpayer funded and the Conservatives have no mandate to go against the wishes of prairie farmers. Again, this is about the protection of small and medium farms. On that note, considering the government's utter disregard for the results of the September plebiscite, the farmers are also free from having a government that listens to them.

My New Democrat colleagues and I believe that the government should withdraw Bill C-18. We believe that the single desk for wheat and barley is a highly successful institution that plays a vital part in prairie society and the economy. The bill is reckless. It will spell economic hardship for our prairie farmers and communities, especially during these tough economic times.

The member cannot guarantee that these farmers will not lose their farms. The Conservatives cannot guarantee that the price of farmers' grain will not go down. They cannot guarantee that big agriculture will not buy out their farms.

• (1645)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important for those who are listening to the debate that we be very clear that a good majority of prairie wheat farmers support retaining the Canadian Wheat Board. In fact, well over 20,000 prairie farmers voted to keep the Canadian Wheat Board. These individuals have seen the value of the Wheat Board for a wide variety of reasons. That has been talked about at great length.

I would ask for the member's opinion on what economists have said about the negative impact of getting rid of the single desk. In many rural communities there is a great deal of concern that it would have a negative impact. For many of those small farms that she made reference to it will have a negative impact.

Maybe she could comment briefly on the impact on the rural communities in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta as a result of this bill.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely correct. As I indicated before, the bill is reckless and would profoundly affect the lives of farmers.

My colleague talked about economists. Richard Gray, a University of Saskatchewan agricultural economist, said that large grain

companies like Viterra, Cargill and Bunge will benefit from having a huge new supply of sellers competing to unload their product.

This does nothing for the port of Churchill. If anything, the port of Churchill will not be protected by this. They already have different ports they can use to market their wares. It is the small communities that will suffer the impact of this. We only need to look at what happened in Australia.

To add insult to injury, the government is rushing this legislation through the House. It is shutting down debate in an unprecedented manner. The reason we have a process in the House is so that good, smart decisions prevail. It is a process designed to avoid rash decisions and to provide peace, order and good government for the people of Canada, which the Conservative government refuses to do.

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we live in uncertain financial times. The economies of individual countries of the European Union, countries like Greece, Italy, and Spain are over their heads in debt, and it is getting worse. No one knows where or when the global financial hardship will end. The economy of our largest trading partner, the United States, is still mired in debt. The U.S. has yet to get back on its feet following the 2007 recession. Worries that Europe's crisis could worsen and spread are spooking investors and consumers.

Here in Canada our economy has fared better than most, but there is an undercurrent of unease, an undercurrent of nervousness, an undercurrent of fear. How will our economy weather the impending storm? That is the outstanding question. There is no answer, not yet.

The Conservative Minister of Finance has acknowledged that Canada's economy faces obvious risks from financial troubles in the United States and in Europe. When David Cameron, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, spoke to this House in September, he said that the problems in the eurozone are now so big that they have begun to threaten the stability of the world economy.

Here we are today in these uncertain financial times and the Conservative government's answer to these uncertain financial times is to gut the federal public service, throw more people in jail, download expenses to the provincial governments, and kill the Canadian Wheat Board.

Now, I am not a prairie boy. I have never walked in fields of golden wheat. I do not know what it is like to live on flat land, land flat as far as the eye can see. I am a bay man. That is what we call it back home. I am a bay man from around the bay. I have lived all my life on rocky land that rolls to the sea.

Government Orders

There is a common thread between the Prairies and the extreme east of this country, Newfoundland and Labrador. That common thread is common sense. My colleague, the NDP MP for Winnipeg Centre has pointed out in this House on numerous occasions, and this is a point that has resonated with me and should resonate with all Canadians, that there has never been one shred of evidence that farmers will be better off without the Canadian Wheat Board.

How can the Conservative government, which bills itself as being such a great steward of the Canadian economy in these tough economic times that will only get tougher, be so reckless as to turn the prairie farm economy on its head without even doing a cost benefit analysis? How?

Allen Oberg, a farmer and chair of the Canadian Wheat Board's board of directors, said:

This government has no plan. It has done no analysis. It has not even consulted farmers. Its approach is based solely on a blind commitment to a sound-bite phrase, called "marketing freedom". Yet, here we are, barrelling ahead on a timeline that will rip apart a 75-year-old marketing system in a matter of months, and hamper any potential successor organization. This government's reckless approach will throw Canada's grain industry into disarray. It will jeopardize the \$5-billion export sector. It will shift money away from the pockets of Canadian farmers into the hands of American corporations.

How can the Conservatives justify not carrying out a cost benefit analysis? How can the Conservatives base their argument on the strength of a free market when prairie farmers freely voted to market wheat through the Canadian Wheat Board?

On September 12, a majority of farmers voted in a plebiscite to keep the Wheat Board. A total of just over 38,000 farmers submitted mail-in ballots during the plebiscite, for a participation rate of 56%. That 56% is on par with the turnout for the last three federal elections.

• (1650)

Some 62% of respondents voted in favour of retaining the single desk for wheat. How can the Conservatives ignore those results? Easily enough when they have a majority government. That majority government power is a breeding ground for arrogance, a growing arrogance that has the Conservatives thinking they know better than Canadian farmers. That is not the case. Not so; not a chance.

What fishing and farming have most in common at this particular moment in our history is that they are both under direct attack by the Conservative government. In the Prairies, the Conservatives are attacking the livelihood of farmers with their attempt to kill off the Canadian Wheat Board. On the west and east coasts, the fisheries are their target with ongoing moves to gut what is left of the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

What the Conservative government should realize, and must realize, is that its buddies on Bay Street cannot feed Canadian families. That is a simple fact of life.

I do not get it. I do not understand why the Conservatives have it in for Canada's primary producers: fishermen and farmers. Why? Who will benefit? Who will be threatened?

At the same time that the federal Conservatives are attempting to kill off the Canadian Wheat Board, back home in my home province,

the Progressive Conservative provincial government is moving toward the creation of a marketing board for fish.

The federal Conservatives are killing off the Wheat Board, which markets and brands Canadian wheat and barley around the world, at the same time that the provincial PCs in Newfoundland and Labrador are attempting to create a similar type fish board to market and brand our seafood around the world. That makes no sense. If anything, it shows that there should more study, more investigation, more review so that smart decisions can be made.

The federal Conservatives are killing the Wheat Board while the provincial PCs in Newfoundland and Labrador are birthing a fish board. Two governments, two different directions.

What do we know about the Canadian Wheat Board? We know the board sells grain to more than 70 countries around the world. The board returns all profits to farmers. That is between \$4 billion and \$7 billion a year. We know that the Wheat Board does not set grain prices. Prices are established by global supply and demand factors. However, the Canadian Wheat Board's size and market power are used to help maximize grain prices.

Therefore, it is logical to assume that in the absence of the Canadian Wheat Board prices will not be maximized, as was the case with the Australian wheat board whose monopoly was abolished in 2006. In three short years, Australia's 40,000 wheat farmers went from running their own grain marketing system, selling virtually all of Australia's wheat, 12% of world wheat production, worth about \$5 billion, to being mere customers of Cargill, one of the world's largest agribusiness corporations, which is privately owned by a company in the United States.

Since 2006 the Australian wheat board's share of wheat sales has dropped from 100% to 23% nationally, with 25 companies in the market all looking to make money on the spread between purchase and sale price. Make no mistake, people are still making money off Australian wheat, but it is not so much the Australian farmer who is making the money as the new middleman, the big corporations.

I want to end my speech with this thought which struck me today after I read the *Globe and Mail*. I read this:

Stephen Harper's crime legislation that triggered—

• (1655)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I would just remind the hon. member that he may not use the name of other members in his speech and that he has about 20 seconds remaining in his time.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: My apologies.

[The Prime Minister's] crime legislation that triggered last spring's election could pass through the Commons this week as it makes it way to becoming the law of the land - and Canadians still don't know how much it costs.

Government Orders

We do not know how much it costs. How does that make sense? We do not know the cost to the Canadian economy of eliminating the Canadian Wheat Board. That is not good enough.

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague across the way. My father won the world championship in alfalfa in 1958. He grew the grain in northern B.C., in Fort St. John, and went to Toronto to collect that award. If he were here today, he would ask why he could not be equal with farmers in Ontario who have the freedom to market wheat and alfalfa as they see fit and why he could not have the liberty to do the same?

My question is simple. Why does my friend across the way not like liberty and equality?

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member across the way for the question and congratulate his father on that 1958 award.

What I know is this. My home province of Newfoundland and Labrador does not have a marketing arm. It has individual companies that try to market, brand and sell fish, and to date it has not worked. Its industry is but a shadow of its former self.

There was a complete review of the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery just carried out, a memorandum of understanding, and one of the principal findings of that MOU was that there should be a marketing arm established to brand and market Newfoundland and Labrador fish because it has not worked piecemeal.

It has not worked with individual processing companies selling and marketing their own products. It has not worked, so Newfoundland and Labrador is moving toward a marketing arm for its fish. If it works, if Newfoundland and Labrador fishermen are stronger as one, I would say to the hon. member across the way that the same would hold true for prairie farmers.

• (1700)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague brought up a very good point, which is whether this decision to do away with the single desk is based on any extensive study of the situation. I have not personally seen it. Yes, it is often brought up by members of the government that this is in the name of marketing freedom and I am sure there are some farmers who want the freedom to market their grain. They all have a few acquaintances who have spoken to them and said that they would like to market their grain independently. However, there is also a large number who, for whatever reason, have voted not to go that way and they are concerned that if the Canadian Wheat Board is no longer a monopoly, they will be worse off.

How does the government make the decision? Is it based on its friends saying that it is a good thing to have market freedom or is it based on a serious study that shows that overall, when this legislation is adopted, all farmers or at least the majority of farmers will be better off in this country?

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. From day one, since this legislation was introduced in the House of Commons, New Democrats have asked for a cost benefit analysis. Has a cost benefit analysis been carried out? The answer is no, it has not been carried out.

In the absence of a cost benefit analysis, in the absence of hard and fast numbers as to whether the Wheat Board fulfills its mandate and western farmers would be better off marketing and selling their wheat through a Canadian Wheat Board, this is pure speculation.

The fact is that in these uncertain financial times, with what is happening in the European Union and our partner to the south, the United States, the Conservatives are taking an incredible chance with the western economy by trying this experiment. In the absence of hard and fast numbers, and a solid cost benefit analysis, that is all this is: an experiment.

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, the member who is also from St. Paul originally. We are proud to have him speak on the Canadian Wheat Board.

I would like to take a couple of minutes from my prepared text to respond to a couple of things that my hon. colleague before me talked about. In fact, there was a report done. It was one of about five that was brought up at the Wheat Board committee that said that western Canadian farmers would actually benefit by approximately \$450 million to \$628 million a year by gaining marketing freedom. That is not even taking the inefficiencies of the Canadian Wheat Board into account. That is not even talking about more jobs through value-added sectors. That is just talking about money that could potentially be in farmers' pockets. So just because the hon. colleagues across the way choose not to read the reports does not mean that they have not been done.

The other aspect I would like to point out is this is a very serious issue for western Canadian farmers. This is something that my producers in the Westlock—St. Paul region are counting on for August 2012. For hon. colleagues across the way to get up and ramble on about talking points that they use about government crime policy has nothing to do with jobs and money in the pockets of western Canadian farmers. I find that absolutely offensive.

In fact, I am not knowledgeable about a marketing fish board in Newfoundland, but if I were to vote on it in the House of Commons, I would definitely take the time to at least talk to some fishermen from Newfoundland.

I ask my hon. colleagues across the way, and there are going to be many western Canadian farmers here this week, to please take time and talk to them. Talk to them about what they see in opening up the Canadian Wheat Board and allowing farmers to have the option for marketing freedom while still keeping the Wheat Board in place for other farmers who want to use it.

Government Orders

I am honoured to speak to the bill. Our government's top priority is the economy in which the agriculture industry plays a vital role. We believe that all Canadians should be able to position their business to capture the marketing opportunities that are open to them. When passed, this legislation would provide western Canadian farmers with the same freedom and opportunities as other farmers in Canada already enjoy. That is the freedom to market their grain, based on what is the best for their business, to the buyer of their choice.

On October 18 the hon. Minister of Agriculture introduced legislation that aims to give farmers the right to choose how to market their wheat, durum and barley independently or through a voluntary Canadian wheat board. The marketing freedom for grain farmers act would give every farmer in western Canada the freedom to choose how to market their grain. Whether that is to a buyer who pays the full price on delivery, or through a pooled offer by the Canadian Wheat Board, our intention is to have this open marketing system in place for August 1, 2012.

However, as soon as the bill receives royal assent, it will allow farmers and grain companies to enter into forward contracts for the purchase or sale of wheat, barley, durum for the execution after August 1, 2012.

As we all know, nothing good ever comes easily. Change brings challenge, but it also brings a wealth of opportunity. Our government is working diligently with industry to make the road to an open market as smooth as possible, so farmers can capture as many of these opportunities as possible.

During our extensive consultations, industry has raised a number of valid issues around the transition process.

Over the summer a working group comprised of experts in the field met with a wide range of industry players. It heard a broad range of advice on how the grain marketing and transportation system could transition from the current CWB-run system to an open market that includes voluntary marketing pools and it released its report in September. The report does an excellent job of addressing the major transitional issues faced by the sector.

The group focused on a broad set of issues affecting the grain handling and transportation system including: access to elevators, rail and ports; access to producer cars and short lines; funding market development and research; price transparency; and tools for price discovery.

On the issue of access to port terminals, the working group examined this issue in some detail. It expects that grain companies will be actively competing for grain volume in an open market. Grain companies need volume and they have gone on record saying that they will offer access to get it.

• (1705)

Grain companies already offer handling services at ports to third parties that do not own elevators or port terminals, many of which are direct competitors.

There will be an adjustment, there is no doubt, but some producer groups are already showing they can compete and add value for farmers by forming alliances and synergies through the chain. For

instance, some inland terminals are co-owners of the Alliance Grain Terminal in Vancouver, and others have relationships with line companies.

These commercial relationships provide a win-win situation. They benefit farm members. It is already happening and it will continue to happen under marketing freedom.

On the issue of rail access, our government knows that proper rail service remains absolutely vital to doing business.

That is why the working group recommended that the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities continue the implementation of the rail freight service review initiatives.

We recently announced the appointment of Jim Dinning to lead a facilitation process to enhance rail freight service. Mr. Dinning brings a depth of experience and expertise in building consensus among industry leaders and government.

I would add that the industry also welcomed this announcement. "We are pleased to see the action plan set in motion", said David Nobbs, chair of Pulse Canada. Rick White, general manager of the Canadian Canola Growers Association said, "We are very pleased that the Government of Canada has taken steps to implement the first of four key recommendations, and we look forward to working with Mr. Dinning during the facilitation process".

The facilitation process will bring together shippers, railways and other key players to develop a template for service agreements and a streamlined commercial dispute resolution process. This was one of the key aspects that our shippers asked for when the level of service review was first undertaken.

Once the facilitation process is complete, our government has committed to tabling legislative changes that will give shippers the ability to establish agreements with the railways, promoting more predictable and efficient services.

On the issue of producer cars, the right to producer cars is protected in the Canada Grain Act, and the Canadian Grain Commission allocates these cars to producers. This will not change under the marketing freedom act.

The Canadian Wheat Board monopoly has no bearing on access to producer cars and our government will continue to protect producers' interests.

Under the new rules, producers and short lines will be able to make commercial arrangements with grain companies or the voluntary Canadian wheat board to market their grain.

Government Orders

Short line railways are expecting some adjustments as they will have more options of marketing partners for the grain volumes they can attract from producers, but already we are seeing some exciting partnerships. In Saskatchewan, for instance, the province's 12th short line railway was announced just recently.

There is no question that producer cars and short line rail will continue to offer an alternative to those producers who wish to use them.

Marketing choice for western Canadian farmers is not just about keeping a promise to our base, a promise that we have been making for over 10 years to western Canadian farmers. It is about modernizing our grains and oilseeds industries as well as our rail sector, and helping farmers continue to drive our economy.

I come from a part of rural Alberta that has been blessed with some of the hardest working, most entrepreneurial people in all of North America, if not the world. The people of Alberta, but in particular Westlock—St. Paul, despise handouts. In fact, most of the time they just want the government to stay out of their way.

My Grandfather Storseth was a perfect example. He left Norway and was willing to work hard and take some risks to get ahead in Canada. He was a farmer who broke his land with his own hands. He also trapped to help provide a living for his friends and neighbours. It is interesting, even back in the 1950s farmers had to work off-farm to earn a living.

When World War II started, he enlisted, and when his time overseas was finished, he came home to his farm in Fort Assiniboine. He never expected the government to give him a handout, but he did expect the government not to regulate him out of existence, not to tell him to whom he could and could not sell his products.

This is not a unique story. It is the story of many rural Albertans. As I said, we are a hard-working people who know that agriculture has always been the backbone of our economy. When the oil and gas booms come, the agriculture sector is the steady hand that continues to feed our province.

The changes that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board is making in Bill C-18, the marketing freedom act, will help provide for that marketing freedom and will help provide a strong, stable economy.

● (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member were to listen to what the average prairie wheat farmer is saying, he or she is saying that farmers do want to keep the Wheat Board; they see the value. I have said this on a number of occasions. I am sure he could sympathize with the farmer who says that a majority of the wheat farmers want to retain the Wheat Board, yet the majority Conservative government is taking away the Wheat Board. The government's argument is that it wants to provide freedom and that the bill is all about freedom.

For the Wheat Board farmer who produces milk and sells wheat, does that freedom apply to both, equally?

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Speaker, it would be interesting to note that my position on the questions he asked has not changed.

The opposition, particularly that member, continues to stand and say the Wheat Board is going to be eliminated. It is not. The Wheat Board will still be in place for western Canadian farmers. What they will also have is marketing freedom. When they put in their crops, when they hope for rain and hope that they do not get hailed out, and then do all the work before winter comes to get the grain in their bins, some of them want to get paid that year. They do not want to wait a full year for the Wheat Board to pay them. Some of them want to access open markets so they can get better money. Some of them want to use the board as a risk management tool. This will all be available to western Canadian farmers.

It is not helpful for members of the opposition, for their own political purposes, to try to create fear in western Canada by saying that the board will be eliminated when, in fact, that is not true.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been misrepresentation of the facts. It was said that the minister had asked Canadian Wheat Board chair Allen Oberg to put the interests of farmers first, ahead of their own, long before it went ahead to work against the minister.

Would the member speak to the outreach efforts that the minister had made to ensure the Wheat Board was in fact invited and supposed to be part of the solution?

● (1715)

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister is absolutely correct. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has done several outreaches, and our government has done many outreaches, to ensure that we had a smooth transition process moving forward.

I am very upset. The fact is that this could have happened a lot more smoothly, a lot more cohesively if, after we announced after May 2 that we would be moving forward with this, Mr. Oberg and the Canadian Wheat Board had helped facilitate the process rather than trying to burn the house down before they were out of it.

In fact, our government will continue to move forward with marketing freedom for western Canadian farmers because it is the right thing to do for western Canadian farmers and for our economy.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the answer I got to my earlier question to the Minister of State for Finance was quite interesting.

Government Orders

I asked him if there were any sources of support, other than his friends, that would argue for this bill. He replied that the studies were his own personal experience. Once again, I would ask him if there really have been studies that have determined that it would be profitable for all farmers. If there are, and I strongly doubt it, I would like the hon. member to tell us about them, to prove that this bill and this change in our society will be profitable for all Canadians and all western farmers.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Speaker, as I stated in my speech, the 2008 Informa report clearly outlines the benefits to western Canadian farmers. In the Wheat Board committee, the working group took a look at about four other reports and tabled them. This is available if the member is truly interested in the benefits to western Canadian farmers. The Informa report said about \$450 million to \$628 million a year would be put directly into Canadian farmers' pockets. That is a tremendous amount of money for our farmers.

It is important to note that western Canadian farmers are asking to have both options, and that is what we are giving them. We are giving them the Canadian Wheat Board, the interim board that would be there, but we are also giving them marketing freedom. I fail to see how the member sees a downside to that.

Other than some little, hand-drawn chart that the member for Winnipeg Centre held up, the opposition has not shown us any proof that this would be detrimental to the western Canadian economy.

Mr. Bernard Trotter (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address the House today as we open an exciting new chapter on the great story of agriculture and the food industry in Canada.

Our government's top priority is the economy, in which agriculture plays a key and vital role. We believe that all Canadians, including farmers, should be able to position their businesses to capture the marketing opportunities that are open to them. We do not believe in the coercive powers of the state to tell people how to sell the products of their own work. We also do not believe in jail terms for western producers who sell their grain to whomever they want.

That means giving western Canadian wheat and barley farmers the freedom to make their own business decisions, including when and to whom they sell their grain. It also means giving food manufacturers in the rest of Canada, including the riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore that I am proud to represent, better access to western wheat and barley so that they can compete globally.

The proposed legislation is about promoting entrepreneurship, innovation and forward thinking; skills that over the past 100 years have made Canada's Prairies the breadbasket of the world. These are skills that have helped agriculture lead the way in driving Canada's economic recovery.

However, for too long, 68 years to be exact, western Canadian grain growers have been held back from bringing these skills to grow new opportunities in their wheat, durum and barley fields. Antiquated Canadian Wheat Board legislation designed for a different time and different circumstances, World War II to be more precise, has cast a chill on innovation and marketing savvy on the Prairies.

Over the years we have seen farmers and other entrepreneurs seeking to add value to their crops by investing in processing beyond the farm gate. They ran into rules requiring them to buy back from the board the very crop they paid to grow, fertilize and harvest. As a result, we have seen a number of processors set up shop in the United States and Asia instead, taking the jobs, growth and export opportunities south and east with them.

I cannot think of an industry that could thrive under this kind of red tape. It is no wonder that non-board crops like oats, canola and pulses have taken off, as they are not subject to the Canadian Wheat Board's stifling web of rules.

Paul Orsak, a farmer near Binscarth, Manitoba recognizes this. He said:

It's not just about marketing choice and finding a competitive bid for my grain. It's about commercializing the industry as opposed to having it stagnate under a heavy wet blanket of a government agency which interferes with market signal and people's willingness to invest.

Those who are looking for an economic analysis need only listen to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce when it said:

The current single-desk model restricts valued added investment in wheat and barley, significantly diminishing the ability of farmers and industry to respond to market demands and earn a premium return in recognition of the innovation provided, including innovation in value-added processing.

Look at the success story of oats when they came out from under the monopoly. In Manitoba alone, the acreage of oats has increased by 200,000 acres since its removal from the Wheat Board's control. This has allowed for the opening and expansion of Can-Oat in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba which employs 125 people in value-added manufacturing jobs.

Let us talk about the potential of new jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in value-added investments that could come to Canada.

I would remind members that the food processing industry in Canada is a major economic driver. It is our largest manufacturing sector in the country with \$90 billion in sales last year and record exports exceeding \$20 billion. It has outpaced the rest of manufacturing in terms of growth in sales, GDP and labour productivity in the past five years. It is Canada's largest manufacturing employer generating 270,000 jobs. It is the largest customer for Canadian farmers purchasing almost half, or 45%, of their production.

These are the types of value-added industries and jobs that will grow in Canada if farmers have the freedom to market their products as they so choose.

Our government is working with the entire value chain to create an open market that attracts investment, encourages innovation, creates value-added jobs and builds a stronger economy. We are committed to delivering marketing freedom to our western wheat, durum and barley growers.

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Western Canadian grain farmers have already put our pulses and canola on the map with more than \$4 billion in exports last year. Who is to tell them that they do not have what it takes to market their wheat, durum and barley as well? This is paternalism at its worst. Marketing freedom will breathe new life into Canada's wheat and barley industries.

• (1720)

Earlier this fall, Alliance Grain Traders in Regina turned the sod on a new pasta plant and hopes to buy quality Canadian durum wheat directly from our hard-working producers on the Prairies. There is no buyback to get in the way and no middleman. This is one big step forward for western Canadian agriculture and the Canadian economy. The plant opening in Regina is scheduled for next year. Alliance is already a major presence in the pulse industry here in Canada. It has pasta plants worldwide. We welcome it and we welcome its investment in the future of prairie agriculture.

Canadian durum is the ingredient of choice in quality pastas around the world, even in Italy where people know a thing or two about pasta.

Last year, durum drove almost three-quarters of a billion dollars of our agriculture and food exports. By adding more value to those exports here in Canada, this investment will create jobs and give an even greater boost to our economy.

Western hard wheat is higher in protein and suitable for certain foods. Ontario soft wheat is currently used for certain products but soft wheat must be blended with hard wheat to make Asian noodles, which are manufactured in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore. A manufacturer who sells Asian noodles into the North American and Asian markets is located in my riding. The company would like to be able to buy blended flour made from both Ontario soft wheat as well as western Canada hard wheat.

Right now, the Wheat Board places restrictions on western Canadian wheat farmers to which their Ontario counterparts are not subject. Ontario wheat farmers have the freedom to sell any portion of their crop to whomever they choose. They have many different ways they can do that. They can do it by pooling, by forward price contracts or by cash pricing through the Grain Farmers of Ontario. They can sell by resting orders, by defined destination contracts and by on-farm pickup. They have flexibility and freedom to sell it how they want. It is not so for western Canadian farmers.

The opportunities for both western Canadian and Ontario wheat are as follows. They can sell that hard and soft wheat into the growing Asian market or, better yet, they can process blended mixtures into flour domestically and sell the flour directly into the rapidly expanding Asian market as 45% of the Asian wheat flour market is devoted to noodles. Ontario processors could produce custom blends and become a one-stop shop. Currently, they often need to buy wheat separately from Australia. We are missing out on opportunities for processing in Canada.

The current Canadian regime not only hurts western grain farmers but it hurts all grain farmers in Canada, including wheat farmers in Ontario.

Our government's top priority is the economy in which the agriculture industry plays a vital role. Our government remains

focused on strengthening our economy and creating jobs for Canadians. We know marketing freedom will drive economic opportunities for our grain industry and the food processing industry.

By attracting innovative new ventures, an open grain market will attract investment, encourage innovation, create value added jobs and build a stronger economy for all Canadians. It will sharpen the entrepreneurial skills of our young and established farmers to grow their businesses, increase productivity and create wealth and prosperity in Canada.

• (1725)

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member opposite what his understanding is of the experience in Australia. We on this side of the House have been reading about that experience. It is always good to learn from other people who have gone through this.

Jock Munro, an Australian wheat farmer, in the *Grain Matters* magazine, said:

We estimate we have lost \$4 billion as growers since the wheat industry was deregulated three years ago.

The loser is definitely the Australian wheat grower, and the winners are the huge companies that control the logistics chain and are end users themselves. The industry is moving into the hands of big multinationals, which is where we were 60-70 years ago. What the Australian industry has done is gone back to where it was pre-single desk.... Deregulation of our wheat industry is becoming a national embarrassment.

Western Canadian farmers should look at the Australian situation...which offers a cautionary tale. Australian farmers have seen no advantages...despite the planning and slow pace of transformation...

We were warned about this in *The Economist*. We were warned about this as well in *The Wall Street Journal*. We were warned that it would be the big multinationals that would reap the profits of this, profits that would otherwise be in the pockets of farmers.

Could the member explain what will make us different from the Australian experience?

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Guelph for his ongoing concern for the travails and the issues of western Canadian grain farmers.

What we are talking about here is Canada and whether the state can actually jail farmers for selling to whom they want to sell. Many countries have eliminated their monopolies. This includes the Soviet Union, China and Australia.

The fundamental question is whether the state can dictate to whom people can sell the crops that they grow with their own hands. That is the important question here.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

Government Orders

One thing that surprises me in this debate is the apparent contrast being made here between freedom and democracy. We hear a lot about freedom from the government side. I would like the hon. member's comments on democracy. If what the government is proposing is so wonderful, why is the government afraid to consult farmers as it should, and why is it that we cannot have a healthy debate for as long as it takes to do it democratically? I would like to hear his comments.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Louis-Hébert for his question.

We are doing great work together in committee, standing up for the interests of entrepreneurs.

[*English*]

This really comes down to the fundamental question about freedom to sell to whom they want to sell. In terms of a plebiscite, that question has been raised many times by members opposite and various plebiscites have been taken. However, if just one farmer wanted to have that freedom to sell to whomever he or she wanted to sell, then that should be enough. There is no reason to jail any farmer for selling crops to whom he or she wants to sell. That is all the science we need. It is a basic fundamental human freedom to sell a crop.

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Churchill.

Canadian democracy is falling apart. We need only look at the protests happening across Canada and Quebec to see that this is the case. Bill C-10 is another example. Instead of dialogue, the Conservatives issued a gag order to force the passage of a very controversial bill on safe streets and communities. They are doing the same thing with Bill C-18. I will briefly go over what this bill proposes.

It proposes that we dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board; put an end to the single-desk marketing of wheat and barley; replace the board with an interim structure with voluntary membership; and privatize it or dissolve it completely if, in the coming years, it is not profitable for any private firms. Bill C-18 is a reflection of the neo-liberalism that underlies this government's economic policy.

Representatives of prairie farmers and other independent experts have raised concerns about the repercussions that dismantling the Canadian Wheat Board would have on farming families and on the economy, not only in the Prairies, but also in Canada as a whole, during this period of economic uncertainty. But the Conservative government is obsessed with its own ideology and it refuses to listen and take these concerns into consideration.

The Canadian Wheat Board is an economic structure that has proven its effectiveness and its impact on the prairie economy. Since it sells Canadian farmers' grain products in about 70 countries around the world, there is no doubt that the Canadian Wheat Board contributes to our country's international presence and helps improve the living conditions of the farmers for whom it brings in some \$4 billion to \$7 billion a year. In other words, it pumps billions of dollars into our economy.

The numbers prove that the Canadian Wheat Board is economically viable. There is absolutely no doubt, and the Conservatives' arguments in favour of dismantling it were ripped apart by speakers before me. The Conservatives are using the failure in Ontario, which withdrew from the single-desk system, to justify dismantling the Canadian Wheat Board. That argument is indefensible. It does not apply to the reality facing farmers in western Canada. To compare the two is specious and even irresponsible.

It is not possible to compare apples to oranges on the grounds that apples and oranges are both fruit. In fact, it was through a democratic process—led by farmers themselves—that Ontario farmers decided to abolish their single desk. Prairie farmers, in contrast, voted to keep the Canadian Wheat Board. Furthermore, the wheat grown by Ontario farmers is used only in pastry, cookies and cakes for local consumption. The wheat grown by prairie farmers is used for bread and pasta for which there is no significant local market.

While Ontario's farmers rely more on grain companies to handle their crops, prairie farmers, on the other hand, count on the board for fair market access for everyone, including those who ship in producer cars.

The Conservatives claim that Bill C-18 will improve farmers' ability to market their wheat and barley by giving them a choice of who to sell their grain to and how to do so. But the reality is quite different: this bill is not compatible with their desires. It removes some freedom of choice from the farmers. At present, the board is controlled, managed and financed by farmers, for farmers.

With Bill C-18, the government will begin to intrude rashly into the board's management, which is the responsibility of the farmers. They do not need the government's help.

● (1735)

We have to wonder whether the Conservatives' desire to dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board is not driven by major grain companies, especially American ones, which are rubbing their hands together at the thought of having free access to Canadian grain.

The Canadian Wheat Board owes its impact to a certain number of parameters that we must remember in order to make an informed decision. Before coming back to the repercussions that dismantling the Canadian Wheat Board will likely have, I should mention that the Canadian Wheat Board manages a supply chain from the farm to the table. The international reputation it enjoys, because of the quality of its constant supply and the quality of the services it provides, is envied by other countries.

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It has a flexible and democratic organizational structure. Since it is not a grain corporation, the Canadian Wheat Board, which the government is seeking to dismantle today with Bill C-18, does not have any grain handling infrastructure—such as grain elevators or port terminals—to receive the grain production from the farmers and to load it onto ships. It is not overly staffed either. What is more, it does not run on a very big budget. Its only major asset is, and remains, its mandate, defined by a law authorizing it to sell western Canadian wheat, durum and barley through a single desk.

In light of these many advantages, we are appealing to this government to maintain the Canadian Wheat Board, because abolishing it would be disastrous, not only for the prairie economy, but also for the lives of prairie families, for whom farming is their bread and butter.

In closing, I would like to point out a few of the repercussions I alluded to. First of all, abolishing the Canadian Wheat Board will reduce profits for large-scale farmers. Indeed, since it is the sole seller of western Canadian wheat and barley, the board generates significant premiums for prairie farmers. With a single-desk model, not having competition among suppliers means that prices are not driven down for the same grain buyer.

Second, abolishing the Canadian Wheat Board will jeopardize the funding of activities for any future entity. Indeed, under the Canadian Wheat Board Act, the board cannot keep any profits or own any real assets. As a result, it has no financial base. It will have to acquire a significant financial base in order to prosper in a free market.

Third, abolishing the board will require whoever liquidates it to pay all the costs associated with the liquidation, so that a new entity cannot be forced to take them on. Given that the government—and not farmers—wants to liquidate it, farmers should not have to assume the cost of this government's ill-advised decision.

Fourth, abolishing the board will have negative repercussions on producer car shippers and on short line railways.

This bill is dangerous. It will be disastrous for prairie farmers in these difficult economic times. We believe that any decision on the future of the board should be made by farmers for farmers.

These are some of the reasons why we oppose abolishing the Canadian Wheat Board.

[*English*]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was said by Socrates, “Nobody is qualified to become a statesman who is entirely ignorant of the problems of wheat”. I am afraid that comes into this realm.

Could the hon. member discuss what will happen when we have the ability to continue the pooling options for wheat, durum and barley but be able to include other grains as well? If the rhetoric is it is going to kill the Canadian Wheat Board and if she recognizes that is all that it is, as far as the Canadian Wheat Board is concerned, the pooling options that are there will give the opportunity for 100% of the people to use that option if they wish to do so.

● (1740)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

I would like to mention that a great deal has been said about freedom and democracy in these debates, but I believe that the terms “freedom” and “democracy” have unfortunately been tarnished by this government. In the bill before us, Bill C-18, there has been no real analysis or consultation of farmers. The government just promotes market freedom, which will definitely throw the grain industry into disarray. That is what will happen with this bill.

[*English*]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier my colleague from Guelph made a comment about the very negative repercussions experienced in another country doing this kind of deregulation.

On Friday, I attended an urban farming forum in Vancouver, which was well-attended. People are interested in what kind of government framework or supports there are for small farmers or young people who want to get into farming or organic farming for more direct farm-to-urban table approaches. It appears to me that this deregulation of wheat growing will go in exactly the opposite direction than what is needed.

What might the effect be on smaller farms and family farms compared with the larger farms after this deregulation of wheat marketing?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

I believe that this deregulation will affect small farmers. We know that the CWB negotiates sales internationally and that it gives the premiums to farmers, and to the most disadvantaged farmers. That will no longer be the case with an open market and deregulation. Farmers are stronger and more competitive because of the CWB. Acting as individuals, they will be destroyed or substantially impoverished. Those are the consequences of this bill.

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Saint-Lambert has aptly described the many negative repercussions of Bill C-18.

In particular, farmers will be subject to greater risks and uncertainty. Small farms will be impoverished. People on family farms will have to work harder in order to survive. In addition, consumers will pay more for food and the quality of wheat will be lower.

I would like my colleague from Saint-Lambert to explain why the cost of food will increase and the quality of wheat will decrease.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for the question.

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I want to come back to an important point about this bill that I think we must truly keep in mind. We are witnessing a rather odd phenomenon: the flouting of democracy. The government is dismantling a powerful tool for farmers, a tool that promoted some fairness and equality for the sale of grain products. Furthermore, the livelihood and well-being of farmers deserved a real debate in the House. Unfortunately, the farmers were not heard and the debate was not held.

• (1745)

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today Canadians are witnessing the anti-democratic, ideological agenda of the Conservative government.

Western Canadians are today witnessing a government take a position without listening to the very voices of the people they claim to represent. Today many Canadians will realize the way in which the federal government does not represent us and why it is time to talk about the need to have real representation about the real issues that matter to Canadians.

I want to begin by responding to the allegations made in the House these last few days that have involved my name. I am very disappointed by the allegations made by the member of Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre and the Chief Government Whip.

The government whip approached me last week after a disruption in the gallery and accused me of organizing it. I made it clear that this was not the case. In Parliament we are all hon. members and the acceptance of the word of a member of Parliament is fundamental to the functioning of the House.

Instead of accepting my word as a member of the House, the Chief Government Whip approached me in this very Chamber and indicated to me the phrase “you will get attacked”. He went on to repeat the fictional story that he and his colleagues shared in this House.

I want to make it clear that I provided gallery passes to a group of western farmers who support the Wheat Board. I provide passes, like so many members of Parliament, to people who visit their House of Commons. I had no knowledge there would be a disruption. For the record, that member of the public who protested in this gallery just hours later apologized to me and noted that I had no knowledge of his intentions and certainly had no part in organizing.

The government members, instead, were eager to make unfounded accusations and attempts to intimidate me. This attitude is not fitting for a government that was elected to represent Canadians. The House operates on the basis of honouring members, of honouring the word of members and of honouring the fact that we have been elected to represent Canadians.

I believe the whip should withdraw his statement and apologize to the House. This attitude is a reflection of the government's contempt for anyone who disagrees with them.

I want to make one thing clear. I will not be intimidated by members opposite. I know they have a difficulty with the fact that I represent a rural western Canadian riding. I have news for them. If they continue down this path of arrogance, ideology and contempt

for the voices of western Canadians, they will see lot more New Democratic Party members of Parliament representing western Canada.

The lessons of the government's desire to pursue its extreme ideological agenda on Bill C-18 and dismantling the Canadian Wheat Board is a reflection of patterns we have seen in history before. Might I reference the Mulroney Conservatives who after taking western Canada for granted time and time again were rewarded by being re-elected with only two seats in the House of Commons, and none of them were from western Canada.

That process led to the beginning of the social movement and a political movement in western Canada known as the Reform Party. Many of those members of Parliament came out of that movement. Some have since retired, some are still, today, here. Those people came out of a movement that spoke about democracy, that talked about listening to the grassroots, that talked about respecting the democratic voice of people across western Canada. They talked about the west wanting in and people from western Canada wanting to be heard.

• (1750)

These very same people, these same members of Parliament, have today denied western Canadian farmers the right to vote. Along with that, they have denied western Canadians—the people who live across the prairie provinces and whose livelihoods depend on the work of the Canadian Wheat Board—the ability to speak to oppose them.

The Conservatives talked about having campaigned in the election to dismantle the Wheat Board. For many of our constituencies, that statement is completely and utterly false. They buried it in a platform, and we have heard from people across the Prairies that nowhere was it actually talked about in debates, in campaign events or in the pamphlets that they handed out during the election.

I can speak to the fact that in Churchill the Conservative candidate, who was based in the community that stands to lose the most directly from the loss of the Wheat Board, never once made public reference to the government's plan to dismantle an institution on which so many of the people I represent depend.

We even have the minister's quote in Minnedosa, Manitoba, when he talked about respecting farmers' right to vote. However, days later, after winning a majority government, the government became extremely arrogant and became dismissive of its own commitments during the election campaign. It became so dismissive of the very statements government members had made to western Canadians that we now have it pursuing the exact opposite approach. The government has put forward an agenda and a timeline in this debate that is unprecedented in the way in which it has been able to muzzle any kind of opposition across Canada.

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For the last while, I have had a chance to talk a lot about the old politics, the politics of this government, the politics that Canadians are sick and tired of, the politics of hidden agendas. They are tired of hearing one thing during the election and then, upon electing a government, hearing something completely different. Once the Conservatives got a majority, they were willing to steamroll the rights of western Canadians and steamroll anyone in their way who might have a different point of view.

The Conservatives have brought in closure time and time again, and in a most shocking way when it comes to Bill C-18. This is a tool that signifies their complete lack of respect for Canadians' voices, Canadians who have something different to bring to the table, Canadians who simply want to be heard.

Instead of listening, they have managed to keep busy in a number of other ways. They have kept busy by making videos that insult aboriginal people in the statements they make and videos that demean western Canadian producers.

They have sought ways to bury debate. They use public relations stunts and government money for ads in order to take away the important role that Parliament has to debate these very issues. Instead of being up front, they obfuscate and hide the facts that we need to know as we move forward.

On the contingency fund, it is clear that the government is taking the money from farmers and putting it toward its own state-run agency, having lifted the ceiling, instead of giving that money back to farmers.

I want to acknowledge the work of people who were elected to represent western Canadian farmers: Stuart Wells, Bill Woods, Allen Oberg, Cam Goff, Kyle Korneychuk, Rod Flaman, John Sandborn and Bill Toews. The voices of young farmers such as Sid Stevenson and Matt Gell and the voices of the people of Churchill, of the Bay line, of Winnipeg, as well as voices across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and even parts of British Columbia need to be heard in this House. These are the people the government is taking for granted.

The Conservatives should mark our words: as we stand here to bring voice to those very people, to western Canadians and to all Canadians, we are going to make sure that they know that the arrogance, the ideological agenda and the undemocratic approach of this government is unacceptable, and that next time around we will build a government that actually represents Canadians.

• (1755)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to comment on the disruption in the gallery last week that my hon. friend from Churchill mentioned during her intervention. She mentioned that she felt the chief government whip had intimidated her. I can assure this place, as she well knows, that all the chief government whip was doing was giving her a heads-up that there would be an intervention coming from our side the following day. It was an act of courtesy and certainly not one of intimidation.

I would also point out, as I did in my intervention that day, that our main argument was that the demonstration showed a contempt for Parliament, and that members of her party were encouraging and

condoning that contempt. That is unacceptable, and it should always remain unacceptable.

With respect to the member's comments on the Wheat Board, she says that there is some hidden agenda. We have been talking about this issue for over 20 years. There are farmers who have travelled a great distance to be in Ottawa today because they support everything we are doing to give them the freedom they need. It is costing producers money; it always has.

The final point is that if the Canadian Wheat Board were as valuable an institution as the member suggests, no producers would want to leave it. Producers are doing so because the Wheat Board is not benefiting them.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, perhaps it is important that I remind my colleagues across that this House is built on the very principle of honouring a member's word. That is exactly what did not happen last week in my interaction with the chief government whip or as the member continues to repeat that story.

Let me clear the record: I was not intimidated, but there was every effort to do so, and attempting to do so was an insult not only to us but to the very people we represent.

Let me bring it back to this question: why is the government so afraid, and why has it been so afraid, to allow western Canadian producers a vote? That is my question. Today we know that the government has no answer.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board is an organization operated by farmers for farmers. The bill goes against what a majority of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta grain farmers want. The response by the Prime Minister was best said on October 7 in *The Globe and Mail*:

It's time for the wheat board and others who have been standing in the way to realize that this train is barreling down the prairie track. You're much better off to get on it than to lie on the tracks because this is going ahead.

The Prime Minister treated our prairie farmers like trash when he made those comments.

The prairie grain farmer has spoken. Shortly we are going to have a vote on this bill, and we appeal to the government members to respect the prairie grain farmers, over 20,000 of whom voted overwhelmingly to keep the Wheat Board. We appeal to the government to respect the wishes of those prairie farmers and withhold support for the bill today.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, today we are talking about a government that is fundamentally taking for granted western Canadians. It is a government that has refused to give western Canadians a voice in the House of Commons through its failure to respect the Canadian Wheat Board plebiscite, through its failure to live up to the election commitment of the Minister of Agriculture in my home province of Manitoba, through its failure to follow legislation that commits a vote to farmers and through its failure to hold proper debate both in the House and at committee.

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Why does the government have so much against standing up and listening to the voices of Canadians who might have a different point of view? Today it is the Wheat Board. Tomorrow it is other marketing boards, the CBC and medicare.

We in the New Democratic Party will make sure Canadians know that Canadians will not be steamrolled.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Peace River.

I am pleased to stand and address this issue, which affects the livelihood and future of western Canadian farmers. Farmers, like any other business people, want to make the right decisions for their farms. They already decide what to plant, when to plant, when to spray and when to harvest. They make marketing decisions on their canola and pulse crops, their peas, lentils, beans, oats and many other crops, and they want the very same marketing freedom for their wheat and barley.

As with anyone in business, farmers take the risks and live with the consequences of their business decisions. Whether barbers, plumbers, hardware store owners or Ontario grain growers, Canadian business owners make the decisions. Western farmers want and deserve this same freedom.

Our Conservative government trusts farmers to make their marketing choices based on what is best for their own businesses. We want to put farmers back in the driver's seat so that they can continue to drive the economy, and that is what the marketing freedom for grain farmers bill is all about.

There is much negativity and fearmongering from the opposition MPs and from the Wheat Board itself around the issue of grain marketing in western Canada, and it is unfounded. We believe that a voluntary wheat board could and would be a viable part of a reinvigorated western Canadian grain industry. As the president of the Grain Growers—

• (1800)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I do not like to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Order. Order, please. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture has the floor. I would ask that all members respect the member who has the floor. There will be order, please.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, we believe that a voluntary wheat board can and will be a viable part of a reinvigorated western Canadian grain industry. As the president of the Grain Growers of Canada said recently, “a lot of farmers want to see the CWB as an active player in the open market, so let's put the tools in their toolbox they need to be successful”.

Our government has introduced legislation which, when passed by Parliament, would give farmers in western Canada the freedom of choice that they both want and need. Marketing freedom has been a cornerstone of our Conservative platform since day one, and we ensured that it was included in the throne speech in June. We know farmers want to make their marketing choices based on what is best for their own farms and businesses.

The legislation we have introduced would allow western Canadian farmers to do just that, while removing government control from where it is not needed. Western Canadian grain farmers expect us to deliver on our promises and we are determined to do just that. In fact, that is what is happening tonight. We will be delivering on what we have long promised.

The British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan provincial governments support this change. In fact, I joined the agriculture ministers from both Alberta and Saskatchewan today, along with our own federal agriculture minister, for a press conference on the transition of a mandatory wheat board to a voluntary one.

We want the Wheat Board to work on a model of serving farmers in a post-monopoly environment and we want others to work with us for a smooth transition. We recognize that this is a complex process and I want to assure farmers that we will continue to put their best interests first.

There is a whole range of players to consider, from the farmers to the railways and many more. That is why we have been consulting extensively with stakeholders from across the supply chain, from the farm gate to the elevators to the sea ports. Over the summer, a working group comprised of experts in the field heard a broad range of advice on how the grain marketing and transportation system could transition from the current CWB run system to an open market that includes voluntary marketing pools. The working group is one of the many ways the government is seeking advice on how to move forward.

Our government must and will do all that is possible to ensure an orderly transition to a free market system. We would ask the existing Wheat Board to join us in this transition. We want to make sure the clarity and certainty are there as we work together to level the playing field for our western Canadian grain farmers. We need to ensure that our proposed legislation reflects the needs of farmers and industry for a smooth transition. We are prepared to engage with every level of the grain industry, especially with the Wheat Board itself.

We are turning a new page in our nation's great history and our nation and agricultural sector will be better for it. Over the past century, Canada's grain industry has grown into a powerhouse that brings \$16 billion to the farm gate and drives close to half our agricultural exports. Those dollars create jobs and prosperity here at home, from the combine to the checkout counter. At the same time, our grain farmers have established a world-class reputation for quality that is the envy of the world.

This achievement is not the result of one single player. It is the result of a relentless commitment to excellence by the entire sector: the Canadian Grain Commission, the Canadian International Grains Institute, the Western Grains Research Foundation, the Canadian Malting Barley Technical Centre and, most importantly, the hard-working men and women who make sure we have a world-class product to sell in the first place.

Given our country's success in marketing wheat and barley, why change the system? Because we value marketing freedom and we need to do better. We only need look at the growth in the canola and pulse industry, which has been accomplished through marketing freedom with no single desk seller. As Canada positions itself for future growth, we need a strong, profitable grain sector more than ever.

Our government is proud to generate new opportunities for our grain growers. We are opening up new markets around the world for Canadian high quality products. We are hammering out new free trade agreements with key customers like India and the European Union.

Long term, the outlook for Canada's agriculture sector is bright. Farming is becoming increasingly complex and competitive on the world stage. We are seeing a growing demand for healthy, high quality food and we know Canadian farmers can deliver. Our natural advantages of land, water, a clean environment and a skilled workforce position us well for future growth and prosperity.

•(1805)

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is meeting with industry and provincial and territorial governments to begin shaping a new agricultural framework, known as "Growing Forward 2". This new framework for the future will help us move to a more modern, innovative, competitive, and sustainable sector that will define our success over the next decade.

Exciting new opportunities lie ahead for our farmers. We need to ensure that all farmers right across this great country can position their businesses to capture those opportunities. The marketing freedom for grain farmers act would help them do that. That is why it is so important for Parliament to pass the legislation.

The closing minutes of this debate are approaching. This is a historic moment for our government and for western Canadian grain farmers. I invite the opposition MPs to participate in this historic moment, but in a positive manner. I ask them to sympathize with western grain farmers. I ask them to do what is right. I ask them to vote for marketing freedom for western grain farmers tonight. This is their opportunity.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture talks about encouraging farmers and grain producers. However, there is a serious and fundamental problem because the latter are in fact the legitimate owners of the Canadian Wheat Board. According to the law, they should have been consulted. This would have been a very simple and easy exercise.

Had they agreed to abolish the board, no one would have protested. But there you have it, the government decided to ignore

Government Orders

their rights and their choices. It is an even more serious problem because the government promised to conduct a plebiscite. Then there is the whole issue of what the Conservatives will do with agricultural co-operatives, which have buying and selling constraints. What will they do with milk quotas that limit producers to a given production? These are all important questions that will not be dealt with properly, if we go by the disastrous precedent set in the case of the Canadian Wheat Board, namely, that the government does not consult the people.

[English]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, that is a bizarre question. An MP from Quebec, who does not represent one single western Canadian grain farmer, is telling the Conservative Party, which has 52 MPs from western Canada who do—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. Is the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin rising on a point of order?

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, Quebec is still part of Canada, at least as far as I know.

•(1810)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): These are really matters of debate. It is not really a point of order. We will let the parliamentary secretary continue with his response.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, the false outrage definitely was not a point of order.

My point is that the MP does not represent a single western Canadian grain farmer, yet he is telling Conservative members of Parliament who represent western Canadian grain farmers, in fact 52 out of 57 seats are held by Conservatives, that somehow we are not representing western Canadian grain farmers.

We had a federal election in May 2011. Our members were elected out west. We understand the concerns of western Canadian grain farmers. We represent Canadian grain farmers. We are acting on their behalf by moving forward with marketing freedom.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity on four or five occasions to go out west and talk to hundreds of farms out west, who gathered in groups, who did vote Conservative. However, they told me, clearly, they did not vote Conservative for the purpose of dismantling the Canadian Wheat Board. The member needs to understand that.

When the Wheat Board is dismantled, it will lose its clout. *The Economist* has said that small farms will fail. *The Economist* has said that not only will small farms fail, but small town economies out west will forever change. *The Wall Street Journal* said that profits will be found in the hands of Viterra and Cargill, from whose pockets? From the farmers' pockets.

Government Orders

I ask the member opposite, if he is so convinced that a majority of farmers want this to happen, why did they not hold a vote under section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act? Those same farmers said they would live by whatever that vote determined.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, the question I have to ask my colleague is, what has he got against marketing freedom for western Canadian grain farmers? Why does he not have confidence in their ability to market their own product?

I am assuming that dire fearmongering does not apply to canola, to pulse crops, to beef, to pork, to all of these other commodities that our farmers are quite capable of marketing.

The member expresses absolutely no confidence in western Canadian grain farmers. Shame on him. However, he has an opportunity to redeem himself. Tonight he can vote for marketing freedom for our western grain farmers.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite talk about a referendum. To me, this is an issue of rights, a property rights issue, a basic fundamental right. If the opposition members would choose to vote to remove this right, what other rights might they vote to remove?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, my colleague understands the issue that is at the heart of this legislation, and that is offering marketing freedom to our western Canadian grain farmers.

When I listen to the opposition MPs, they are against that marketing freedom for grain farmers only. It makes no sense. In their own territory, if they happen to represent any farmers, they would want marketing freedom for their farmers, but for some reason, they have carved out western Canadian grain farmers. There would be no marketing freedom for them, not if they had their way.

Once again, I invite the opposition MPs to stand tonight and vote for western Canadian grain farmers, and vote for marketing freedom.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to point out that, to add insult to injury, we have heard the members complaining loudly about opposition members. They are telling us that we lack respect for Canadians when, in fact, they are not even taking the current debate seriously.

What happened in Australia when the Australian wheat board was dismantled? The price of wheat dropped and farmers, who previously received \$99 a tonne for their wheat, were getting only \$27 a tonne. We are thus well aware that small-scale farmers cannot compete against big business, so—

• (1815)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, it was very hard to follow that question as the hon. member spun herself out of control.

The important thing to understand is that there is a vote tonight for marketing freedom for our western Canadian grain farmers. The opposition MPs should stand up in defence of our western Canadian grain farmers. They should vote for marketing freedom to give our

grain farmers every opportunity that other grain farmers across the country enjoy.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. It being 6:16 p.m., pursuant to order made Wednesday, November 23, 2011, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 76*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Coderre	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Freeman
Garneau	Genest

Government Orders

Genest-Jourdain	Giguère	MacKenzie	Mayes
Godin	Goodale	McColeman	McLeod
Gravelle	Groguhé	Menegakis	Menzies
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)	Merrifield	Miller
Hsu	Hughes	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Hyer	Jacob	Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Julian	Kellway	Nicholson	Norlock
Lamoureux	Lapointe	O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Larose	Latendresse	Obhrai	Oliver
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	Opitz	Paradis
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie	Payne	Penashue
Liu	Mai	Poillievre	Preston
Marston	Martin	Raitt	Rajotte
Masse	Mathysen	Rathgeber	Reid
May	McCallum	Rempel	Richards
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud	Richardson	Rickford
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Ritz	Saxton
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Schellenberger	Seeback
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Murray	Shea	Shirley
Nantel	Nash	Shory	Smith
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo	Sopuck	Sorenson
Pacetti	Papillon	Stanton	Storseth
Patry	Pécelet	Strahl	Sweet
Perreault	Pilon	Tilson	Toet
Plamondon	Quach	Trost	Trotter
Rae	Rafferty	Truppe	Tweed
Ravignat	Raynault	Uppal	Valcourt
Regan	Rousseau	Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Sandhu	Savoie	Vellacott	Wallace
Scarpaleggia	Sellah	Warawa	Warkentin
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)		Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sims (Newton—North Delta)		Sky Country)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis	Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Stewart	Stoffer	Williamson	Wong
Sullivan	Thibeault	Woodworth	Yelich
Toone	Tremblay	Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Trudeau	Valeriote — 120	Zimmer — 153	

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Amler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lobb	Lukowski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.*[English]*

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1855)

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

*(Division No. 77)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)

Government Orders

Allison	Ambler	Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Anders	Anderson	Boivin	Borg
Armstrong	Ashfield	Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Aspin	Baird	Brahmi	Brisson
Benoit	Bernier	Brosseau	Byrne
Bezan	Blaney	Caron	Casey
Block	Boughen	Cash	Charlton
Braid	Breitreuz	Chicoine	Chisholm
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Choquette	Chow
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooog	Christopherson	Cleary
Butt	Calandra	Coderre	Crowder
Calkins	Cannan	Cullen	Cuzner
Carmichael	Carrie	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Chisu	Chong	Day	Dionne Labelle
Clarke	Clement	Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Davidson	Dechert	Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Del Mastro	Devolin	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseauit
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Easter	Eyking
Dykstra	Fantino	Foote	Freeman
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Gameau	Genest
Flaherty	Fletcher	Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Galipeau	Gallant	Godin	Goodale
Glover	Goldring	Gravelle	Groguié
Goodyear	Gourde	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Grewal	Harper	Hsu	Hughes
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn	Hyer	Jacob
Hayes	Hiebert	Julian	Kellway
Hoback	Hoepfner	Lamoureux	Lapointe
Holder	James	Larose	Latendresse
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kent	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Kerr	Komarnicki	Liu	Mai
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake	Marston	Martin
Lauzon	Lebel	Masse	Mathysen
Leef	Leitch	May	McCallum
Lemieux	Leung	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Lobb	Lukiwski	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
MacKenzie	Mayes	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Murray
McColeman	McLeod	Nantel	Nash
Menegakis	Menzies	Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Merrifield	Miller	Pacetti	Papillon
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)		Patry	Péclét
Moore (Fundy Royal)		Perreault	Pilon
Nicholson	Norlock	Plamondon	Quach
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon	Rae	Rafferty
Obhrai	Oliver	Ravignat	Raynault
Opitz	Paradis	Regan	Rousseau
Payne	Penashue	Sandhu	Savoie
Poillievre	Preston	Scarpaleggia	Sellah
Raitt	Rajotte	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Rathgeber	Reid	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Rempel	Richards	Sitsabaesan	St-Denis
Richardson	Rickford	Stewart	Stoffer
Ritz	Saxton	Sullivan	Thibeault
Schellenberger	Seeback	Toone	Tremblay
Shea	Shipley	Trudeau	Valeriote — 120
Shory	Smith		
Sopuck	Sorenson		
Stanton	Storseth		
Strahl	Sweet		
Tilson	Toet		
Trost	Trottier		
Truppe	Tweed		
Uppal	Valcourt		
Van Kesteren	Van Loan		
Vellacott	Wallace		
Warawa	Warkentin		
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to		
Sky Country)			
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks		
Williamson	Wong		
Woodworth	Yelich		
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)		
Zimmer — 153			

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin

Nil

PAIRED

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

COPYRIGHT MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed from November 24 consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Copyright Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment at second reading of Bill C-11.

● (1905)

[Translation]

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

The Speaker: Is the hon. member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour rising on a point of order or to indicate how he is voting?

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I am in favour of the motion, but I believe my vote was not recorded.

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

(Division No. 78)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Coderre	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Freeman
Garneau	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogulé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Pécllet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rae	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Sandhu	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Valerioté — 120

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq

Government Orders

Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreesen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
Nicholson	O'Neill Gordon
O'Connor	Oliver
Obhrai	Paradis
Opitz	Penashue
Payne	Preston
Poilievre	Rajotte
Raitt	Reid
Rathgeber	Richards
Rempel	Rickford
Richardson	Saxton
Ritz	Seeback
Schellenberger	Shiple
Shea	Smith
Shory	Sorenson
Sopuck	Storseth
Stanton	Sweet
Strahl	Toet
Tilson	Trottier
Trost	Tweed
Truppe	Valcourt
Uppal	Van Loan
Van Kesteren	Wallace
Vellacott	Warkentin
Warawa	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Watson	
Sky Country)	Wilks
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Williamson	Yelich
Woodworth	Young (Vancouver South)
Young (Oakville)	
Zimmer — 153	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

Government Orders

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CLOSURE AND TIME ALLOCATION

The House resumed from November 25 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion.

• (1915)

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

(Division No. 79)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bennett	Benskin
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Coderre	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
East	Eyking
Foote	Freeman
Garneau	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogulé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rae	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Sandhu	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis

Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau

Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Valeriote— 120

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauson	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai	Oliver
Opitz	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shiple
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks

Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 153

Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House this evening to request further information in response to a question that I asked previously in the House of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

My previous question was whether the government would commit, now, to end the 2% cap on funding and provide full and adequate support for first nations education. The response that I received, which is the response that has been given continuously when the question is raised, was that there was a panel reviewing the matter of aboriginal education, and that we will wait and see what it will produce.

I have talked to many first nations leaders, members and elders since I assumed the post of official opposition critic on aboriginal affairs and northern development. The response has been the same from every leader, every member, every organization trying to further improve access to education for our first nations peoples. The response is simple. First nations children deserve the same access to education as all other Canadian children. The request that has been made is to end the 2% cap on funding.

It is the first anniversary of the government finally endorsing and signing onto the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. By that declaration, the government committed, under articles 14 and 15, to redress the historic injustices against the indigenous peoples of Canada.

In those specific articles, the government committed to take action to ensure that aboriginal children have equal access to education. That includes ensuring that the government of the day finally redress the fact that many first nations schools are condemned either because of infestation of snakes and rats or because of mould. These are the kinds of conditions that we expect in medieval times, not in the 21st century.

We have been hearing a lot on the news about the crisis of housing along Hudson Bay. This is the very same community where a campaign was led by a wonderful young Canadian. Shannen Koostachin started the campaign to ensure that the children in her community finally had a school they could go to. The sad story is that Shannen, in travelling to a school outside of her community, was

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tragically killed in a car accident. The remarkable turnaround is that not only the children of her community but children right across the country have picked up the campaign, called “Shannen's Dream”, which is to bring quality education to all first nations children in this country.

So today again, I am asking the question, when will the government commit? Will it commit now, today, that it will end this discrimination, as it has committed to it internationally and not just to aboriginal children in this country?

• (1920)

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this debate, clearly, on behalf of the constituents of the great Kenora riding and more than 42 first nations communities in my riding where we have been making major inroads to education infrastructure, and we want to stay on that trajectory.

I am pleased, obviously, to rise to speak to the question put by the member for Edmonton—Strathcona about the education provided in band operated schools for first nations children living on reserve.

This government remains fully committed that first nations children achieve the same educational outcomes as other Canadians. This was a goal envisioned by Shannen Koostachin.

As part of our commitment to Shannen's dream, we are working to provide first nations children and youth with a safe and welcoming learning environment, so that they can reach their full potential and acquire the skills they need to enter the labour market and fully share in Canada's economic opportunities.

I am happy, also, to assure the hon. member that we have been extremely active in this regard. In March 2011 the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the Assembly of First Nations, confirmed the appointment of a national panel on first nations elementary and secondary schools. This engagement process would result in recommendations on how to enhance the elementary and secondary education systems and, importantly, the outcomes for first nations children living on reserve.

The panel has completed regional meetings throughout the country. Recently, the panel wrapped up its extensive hearings with its eighth and final round table on first nations education held here in Ottawa.

[Translation]

The panel will then present a report and recommendations to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and to the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations on possible avenues for improving education for First Nations students. We are anxious to get the report and the recommendations from the panel, and we should have them by January.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development invests about \$1.7 billion a year in education for First Nations, including \$1.4 billion for elementary and secondary education and over \$300 million for post-secondary education.

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Through targeted programs like the education partnerships program and the First Nation student success program, we are investing an additional \$268 million over five years and \$75 million in the following years to lay the foundation for long-term improvements to First Nations education.

[English]

I am pleased to report real progress on tripartite partnerships. Since 2008 we have signed five tripartite education agreements with the provinces of New Brunswick, Manitoba, Alberta, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, and the Saskatoon Tribal Council. These join pre-existing tripartite partnership arrangements in British Columbia and Nova Scotia, with 40% of first nation children on reserve attending provincial schools. These partnerships are designed to help first nation students transfer between both school systems without academic penalty.

We also have a responsibility to treat taxpayers' money prudently, which is why Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada's approved annual growth rate for a bundle of basic services remains at 2%. However, the annual overall growth is larger, due to significant new investments made in priority areas through successive budgets since 2006.

Finally, this government continues to make long-term investments in priority areas to improve the quality of life and education for first nations.

• (1925)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his reply. In response, I would like to share the words of a first nation student. It was included in a report called "Our Dreams Matter Too", presented to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. Wesley's message is this:

I'm writing this letter to you as a young native man with something to say about my education. I have attended kindergarten, elementary, and high school on reserve and I am aware of the differences between the education that I have received and the education that non-aboriginal off-reserve students have received. The lack of funding is a concern, the lack of resources is a concern, but the lack of cultural content in our school is the biggest concern for me.... I would like to see this change. I would like to see native aboriginal students treated and funded the same as any other non-aboriginal students because we are all students, we are all human, we are all equal and should be treated as such.

I ask the parliamentary secretary, when will we finally see equality for aboriginal children?

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, clearly our government understands the importance of education and remains committed to ensuring that first nation students enjoy the same educational opportunities as other Canadians. First nation students are entitled to an education that not only encourages them to stay in school, but will also see them graduate with the skills they need to enter the labour market successfully and share fully in Canada's economic opportunities.

Budget 2011 reiterated this government's commitment to work in collaboration with the Assembly of First Nations on reform of first nations elementary and secondary education. We invest more than \$1.4 billion annually for elementary and secondary education. This includes investments of \$268 million over five years, and ongoing funding of \$75 million in each subsequent year for the education partnerships program and the first nation students success program.

In addition, budget 2010 provided a further investment of \$30 million in comparable education for first nations, starting in British Columbia where there is an advanced state of partnership between first nations and the province.

[Translation]

ASBESTOS INDUSTRY

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on September 27, I asked a question of the hon. Minister of Industry. I will read it now to refresh our memories.

This government claims to want to create jobs by supporting the asbestos industry. In reality, it is exporting disease and death to countries that have inadequate labour health and safety standards. This position does not help the communities that are relying on a dying industry. The workers have suffered enough.

What is this government waiting for to show real respect for these people and to develop with them a transition plan to stimulate the economy in that region?

I asked that question in the House, and two months later, the Lac d'amiante mine in Thetford Mines and the Jeffrey mine in Asbestos are now closed. There is no more mining going on in the asbestos region.

My question from two months ago ended on this point: what is this government waiting for to show real respect for these people who are now out of work and to develop a transition plan with and for them?

Something else rather significant has happened recently. More and more elected officials no longer support exporting asbestos. That includes some Conservatives who, anonymously of course, have gone as far as admitting that they wanted to vote in favour of the motion the NDP moved in this House less than a month ago. That motion called for an end to mining and exporting the substance, and for an immediate transition plan to help all workers in the asbestos regions.

Other factors have been added to the mix in the past two months. A growing portion of Quebec civil society has changed its position on asbestos. For instance, the Coalition Pour que le Québec ait meilleure MINE and the Centrale des syndicats du Québec are calling on governments to compensate asbestos workers and their communities immediately—with the money that is supposedly being invested to help that industry recover—so that healthy, sustainable industries can be developed instead.

The Confédération des syndicats nationaux, or CSN, has committed to talks with other unions in order to propose a retraining schedule for people working in the asbestos industry, all with a view to initiating the necessary debates with both levels of government on banning asbestos.

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Given the present circumstances, we have a historic opportunity to stop a commercial activity that exports disease and is very harmful to Canada's reputation. The government therefore needs to finance a transition plan, stop mining asbestos and agree to include the substance on the Rotterdam Convention. That is all.

Will the minister take advantage of this historic opportunity? If not, how can he justify a decision that will not create any jobs in the asbestos region? My question is not about asbestos handling policies, but about the future of the people in the asbestos region.

● (1930)

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have discussed many times in the House, the health and safety of Canadians are priorities for the Government of Canada. We want to ensure that workers across the country are protected, regardless of what sector they work in. Chrysotile is a naturally occurring mineral that has long supported a major mining sector in Quebec.

The Government of Canada has supported the controlled use of chrysotile in the country and abroad for over 30 years.

All those involved in the chrysotile industry, and more specifically in mining chrysotile, recognize that this substance can be dangerous.

That is why there are controlled conditions for mining chrysotile, and this is achieved through the enforcement of appropriate safety regulations.

The government has been clear, and its safety message has been widely shared throughout the world.

In Canada, exposure to chrysotile is controlled by regulations; workplace programs and practices; federal, provincial and territorial limits; and restrictions on certain categories of consumer products and products in the workplace under Canada's Hazardous Products Act.

Chrysotile is not present in consumer products that can break down and release dangerous fibres or dust.

When chrysotile is used industrially, its use is controlled by workplace health and safety regulations.

Our policies on chrysotile have the right goal: safe and responsible use.

In 1984, the governments of Canada and Quebec, working with the industry and unions, founded the Chrysotile Institute.

Since then, this non-profit organization has actively promoted the responsible, controlled use of chrysotile in Canada and abroad.

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I would like to have an answer to just one very specific question. Can the hon. member confirm that the position he just described, which we have heard 30, 100, 150 times in the House and which the hon. member expanded on a bit this evening—will this position on a hypothetical way of using asbestos create a single job tomorrow morning in the Asbestos region? I would just like to get a clear and frank answer to this very simple question.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, chrysotile is the only asbestos fibre produced and exported by Canada.

Canada has long supported the approach of a controlled use of chrysotile.

Over the past 30 years, the federal government has promoted the controlled use of chrysotile nationally and internationally, and we will continue to do so.

We strongly believe that the health risks associated with mining chrysotile and with the manufactured products containing chrysotile, can be managed under regulated and controlled conditions.

Thanks to the Chrysotile Institute, Canada has worked with countries that produce and use chrysotile on effectively implementing regulations on controlled use.

I want to assure the House that, in terms of using chrysotile, our government approach's is a responsible one.

● (1935)

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

(The House adjourned at 7:36 p.m.)

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