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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, March 6, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 6, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[*Translation*]

PLANS AND PRIORITIES

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, on behalf of 92 departments and agencies, the reports on plans and priorities for 2014-15.

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[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in a parliamentary mission to Athens, Greece, the next country to hold the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, and Zagreb, Croatia, the newest country to join the European Union, which was held in Athens, Greece, and Zagreb, Croatia, from November 14 to November 20, 2013.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following report of the Canadian Delegation of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation at the following meeting: the annual national conference of the Council of State Governments. That meeting was held in Kansas City, Missouri, United States of America, from September 19 to 22, 2013.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology in relation to supplementary estimates (C) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

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PETITIONS

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present seven different groupings of petitions. They are all dealing with the same subject matter.

The petitioners are asking that in the interest of public safety, they want to see tougher laws and implementation of new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present three petitions today, containing several hundred signatures, calling for the government to take urgent action under the Species At Risk Act to protect the 81 remaining southern resident killer whales.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition from Fair Vote Canada, which calls for creating a fairer electoral representation system by implementing proportional representation.

PENSIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I table a petition today, signed by many of my constituents in Winnipeg North, dealing with the issue of government's attitude, particularly the Prime Minister's, toward increasing the retirement age from 65 to 67.

The petitioners believe that people should continue to have the option to retire at age 65, and that the government not in any way diminish the importance and value of Canada's three major seniors programs: OAS, GIS, and CPP.

*Routine Proceedings***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 172, 176, 178, 180, 182, 184, 191, 194, 206, 217, 221, 226, 241, 242, and 253.

[Text]

Question No. 172—**Mr. John Rafferty:**

With regard to the Department of Veterans Affairs, what criteria were used to determine which regional Veterans Affairs offices would be closed by February 2014, as announced in the 2012-2013 budget?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the closure of some regional offices reflects the changing demographics of Veterans across Canada. The well-being of Veterans and their families is Veterans Affairs Canada's top priority. The department is committed to providing them with the exemplary benefits and programs that they deserve, no matter where they live, as part of Veterans Affairs Canada's ongoing work to improve service and adjust to the changing needs and demographics of Veterans. Case managers will continue to make home visits to Veterans who need them.

Veterans Affairs Canada has increased the number of case managers in areas of high demand and has opened and maintained 17 operational stress injury clinics and 24 integrated personnel support centres near Canadian Armed Forces bases and major cities across Canada.

Veterans Affairs Canada has also partnered with Service Canada to provide even more options to access the Department's programs and services, especially for those living in rural or remote areas. Canadian Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families can now obtain general information and apply for certain benefits at any one of the approximately 600 Service Canada centres nationwide, where they also have one-stop access to a wide range of other federal programs and services.

This will mean greater convenience and less travel for Veterans, because they are no longer limited to one location for in-person service. And, to provide even more support in regions where underused area offices will be winding down, a Veterans Affairs Canada client service agent will be posted in Service Canada Centre locations—specifically Kelowna, B.C.; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Brandon, Manitoba; Thunder Bay, Ontario; Windsor, Ontario; Sydney, Nova Scotia; Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; and Corner Brook, Newfoundland—to help Veterans with their benefits applications and answer any questions they may have.

Veterans across Canada can continue to expect the same high level of service and, as always, individuals can receive assistance directly from the department by calling its toll-free number, 1-866-522-2122, or by visiting its website, www.veterans.gc.ca.

Question No. 176—**Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), what applications have been received from the riding of Avalon for fiscal years 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, including (i) the specific projects that were approved or rejected in each fiscal year, (ii) the name and physical address of proponent(s), (iii) the project title, (iv) the proposed scope of work, (v) the total cost of the projects, (vi) the amount of funding approved by ACOA, (vii) the funding program(s) within ACOA that the funding approved?

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, ACOA, is concerned, with regard to applications received from the riding of Avalon for fiscal years 2009-2010 through 2012-2013, ACOA does not track projects by federal ridings. Information on projects approved by ACOA in Newfoundland and Labrador can be found on the agency's website.

Question No. 178—**Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to the Prime Minister's Office, as of February 1, 2013: (a) how many individuals make an annual salary of \$150,000 a year or more; (b) how many individuals make an annual salary of \$200,000 or more; (c) how many individuals make an annual salary of \$250,000 a year or more; (d) how many individuals make an annual salary of \$300,000 or more; (e) of those who make an annual salary of \$200,000 or more, how many received a performance award, otherwise known as a bonus; and (f) of those who received a performance award, what was the amount of each?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the Privacy Act and the principles set out in the Access to Information Act, and the information requested has been withheld on the grounds that the information constitutes personal information.

Question No. 180—**Hon. Gerry Byrne:**

With regard to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), for each year from 2003 to 2013, what was the CPI for each household income quintile given the goods and services typically purchased by each quintile according to the average household spending patterns?

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the consumer price index, CPI, is an indicator of changes in consumer prices experienced by Canadian residents. It is obtained by comparing, over time, the costs of a fixed basket of goods and services purchased by consumers. Data by quintile are not and have never been compiled for the CPI on an ongoing basis, as the CPI is meant to represent a measure of overall consumer inflation.

Question No. 182—**Mr. Ted Hsu:**

With regard to Canada Student Loan forgiveness for eligible family doctors, residents in family medicine, registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, registered practical nurses, licensed practical nurses, or nurse practitioners who work in rural or remote communities: (a) how many medical professionals have applied for loan forgiveness since April 1, 2013, broken down by (i) eligible medical profession, (ii) the designated community in which the applicant is working; (b) how many medical professionals who have applied for loan forgiveness have been accepted for loan forgiveness since April 1, 2013, broken down by (i) eligible medical profession, (ii) the designated community in which the applicant is working; (c) what is the anticipated total value of loan forgiveness payments that will be paid to qualified medical professionals under this program by April 2014, broken down by (i) loan forgiveness period, (ii) eligible medical profession, (iii) the designated community in which the applicant is working?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, budget 2011 announced that the government would forgive a portion of the federal share of Canada student loans for new family doctors, nurse practitioners, and nurses who practice in underserved rural and remote communities. Since 2012-13, those eligible family doctors have received loan forgiveness of up to \$8,000 per year, to a maximum of \$40,000. Nurse practitioners and nurses who are eligible have been able to receive up to \$4,000 per year, to a maximum of \$20,000.

The Minister of State for Social Development announced in January 2014 that in the first 10 months, almost 1,200 family doctors and nurses had received loan forgiveness.

With regard to (a)(i), the numbers of eligible medical professional who have applied for loan forgiveness since April 1, 2013 include the following: 53 family doctors, 99 residents in family medicine, 1,039 registered nurses, 40 registered psychiatric nurses, 132 registered practical nurses, 275 licensed practical nurses, and 14 nurse practitioners.

With regard to (a)(ii), due to privacy concerns, ESDC cannot provide the information requested.

With regard to (b)(i), the following numbers do not include applications that have yet not been finalized: 37 family doctors, 58 residents in family medicine, 845 registered nurses, 34 registered psychiatric nurses, 97 registered practical nurses, 206 licensed practical nurses, and 10 nurse practitioners.

With regard to (b)(ii), due to privacy concerns, ESDC cannot provide the information requested.

With regard to (c)(i), the loan forgiveness approvals for the periods ending between April 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014, total \$8,480,000.

With regard to (c)(ii), the loan forgiveness approvals by eligible medical profession include the following: family doctors, \$400,000; residents in family medicine, \$800,000; registered nurses, \$5,200,000; registered psychiatric nurses, \$200,000; registered practical nurses, \$600,000; licensed practical nurses, \$1,200,000; nurse practitioners, \$80,000.

With regard to (c)(iii), due to privacy concerns, ESDC cannot provide the information requested.

Question No. 184—**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:**

With regard to the position of Ambassador of Fisheries Conservation: (a) does the government plan to fill this position; (b) if so, when; and (c) if not, why not?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are no plans to fill the position of Ambassador of Fisheries Conservation at this time given that most of the current work being done internationally with respect to fisheries is on the implementation of existing commitments rather than the negotiation and creation of new ones. Canada's current level of representation is adequate to address the requirements of such implementation work.

Question No. 191—**Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With regard to the equipment provided to regular and reserve members of the Canadian Armed Forces, what is the total number of newly enlisted members who

have not yet been issued boots since January 1, 2013, broken down by (i) regular or reserve status, (ii) branch of the Canadian Armed Forces, (iii) rank of member, (iv) unit, (v) month of enlistment?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, allotments of clothing and equipment, including boots, are tracked in individual files in the defence resource management information system. To determine whether an individual has received the appropriate pair, or pairs, of boots, it would be necessary to task each unit to review each individual file for all types of boots. Furthermore, the individual files in the defence resource management information system do not contain information on the enrolment date. Reviewing all of these files was not possible within the time allotted to respond to this question.

Question No. 194—**Hon. Geoff Regan:**

With regard to the Champlain Bridge in Montreal, Quebec: (a) how much is this replacement bridge estimated to cost; and (b) what is the estimated toll charge for this replacement bridge?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), final project costs will be determined by the end of the competitive procurement process for the public private partnership, PPP, after the project agreement has been signed. Very preliminary estimates suggest the cost of the project could be between \$3 billion to \$5 billion. This would include design and construction costs for the whole project, which, in addition to the replacement of the Champlain Bridge, includes the alignment with A-10; highway works on île des Sœurs; the replacement of the île des Sœurs bridge; as well as the widening and reconstruction of the federal portion of A-15.

With regard to part (b), it is too early to say what the toll rate will be. Additional studies will be completed and discussions will be held prior to the establishment of the toll rate. Several toll scenarios are being examined that are consistent with tolls in effect in the Montreal region and will be made public at a later date.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 206—Mr. Scott Simms:**

With regard to software used by the government on all digital platforms: (a) what software is permitted for use, broken down by (i) servers, (ii) workstations and desktops, (iii) laptops and portable computers, (iv) personal digital assistants, cell phones and other personal electronics, (v) rationale; (b) for each subsection of (a), what software is banned from use; (c) for each subsection of (a) and (b), where is this software developed; and (d) for each subsection of (a) and (b), if the software is not released as an “open source” (as defined by the Open Source Initiative) or “free software” (as defined by the Free Software Foundation), are viable open source or free software alternatives available, (i) have they been explored, (ii) what was the rationale for their rejection?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in order to produce such information to the level of detail requested, organizations would need to manually verify each and every hardware item maintained by the organization. The collection and compilation of such data would take several months. Therefore, it is not possible to produce the information requested within the prescribed timeline.

Question No. 217—Ms. Irene Mathysen:

With regards to the indoor fish farming facility in Thames Centre, Middlesex County: (a) how much funding was issued; (b) was the funding a result of the promise of job creation; and (c) what verifications were made to ensure funding was spent appropriately?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the total funding issued to the project by Fisheries and Oceans Canada under the aquaculture innovation and market access program, or AIMAP, was \$415,000. Other contributions included a \$1,000,000 repayable loan from Agriculture Canada's Sand Plains Community Development Fund, administered by the Ontario Association of Community Futures Development Corporations, along with \$1,082,882 in cash and \$2,800,000 of in-kind funding from 1767065 Ontario Inc., Sand Plains.

With regard to (b), the funding allocation provided by Fisheries and Oceans Canada was not directly intended for job creation, but rather for the purchase of equipment to catalyze aquaculture industry investment from other sectors. At a broader level, AIMAP's objectives were to spur investment in innovation and to increase industry competitiveness, resulting in industry expansion and increased job creation within the aquaculture sector. The project was reviewed first by a regional review committee and later by a national review committee against program criteria, scope of impact, plan and performance management, and budgetary considerations.

With regard to (c), Fisheries and Oceans Canada ensured the appropriate allocation of funding through site visits by Fisheries and Oceans Canada staff, collection of appropriate invoices to support expense claims, and validation through a third party audit of the project's financial records by a chartered accountant.

Question No. 221—Hon. Mark Eyking:

With regard to employment with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, how many involuntary job reductions have been implemented in the department each year from 2006 to 2013, broken down by (i) year, (ii) program activity, (iii) sub-program activity, (iv) specific job description, (v) the reason for the involuntary reduction?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (i), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, including the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency, had 895 involuntary job reductions in the years 2006 to 2013.

With regard to (ii), there have been 895 involuntary job reductions in 11 program activities.

With regard to (iii), there have been 895 involuntary job reductions in 29 sub-program activities.

With regard to (iv), the 895 involuntary job reductions affected 413 job titles.

With regard to (v), there were five reasons for the 895 involuntary job reductions.

Question No. 226—Mr. Brian Masse:

With regard to the government's announcement on May 28, 2012, that it will allocate \$17.5 billion over five years to combat the invasion of Asian Carp in the Great Lakes Watershed through prevention, early warning, rapid response and management and control, what is: (a) the progress on these initiatives; and (b) the total amount of monies distributed in each focus area to date?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members will please note that the government's announcement was for \$17.5 million over five years.

Progress to date under each of the program's initiatives includes the following.

In terms of prevention, collaborative work is under way with partner groups, such as the Invasive Species Centre, to conduct public outreach and education on the threat posed by Asian carp and how the public can help. We have also begun, with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, a binational risk assessment for one of the Asian carp species, grass carp. This risk assessment will form valuable science advice for both Canada and the United States in terms of prevention, mitigation, and management of this species. Research into movement of fishes in canals towards potential development of early warning systems is well under way, as well as research into potential control or response mechanisms such as physical barriers, pressure barriers, and sound and bubble barriers.

In terms of early warning, 22 early detection sites have been set up in the highest-priority lakes, Lake Erie and Lake Huron, for early warning in 2013. These sites were extensively monitored for Asian carp detection, as well as determining best means for detecting Asian carp species early. These sites are now established and will be visited each year for long-term monitoring as well as to establish a pre-invasion baseline of the fish community. Plans are under way for the development of similar early detection sites in Lake Ontario and Lake Superior. Genetic tools for use in early warning are also being researched and will be used in key areas.

In terms of response, protocols and plans have been developed in partnership with the Province of Ontario and the United States for responding to Asian carp. There were also two captures of grass carp this past summer in Canadian waters. These individuals were later found to be sterile, but response activities were immediately initiated by Fisheries and Oceans Canada in partnership with the Province of Ontario.

In terms of management, continued collaboration with the Province of Ontario occurs to manage the live trade pathway for Asian carp. Drafting of a national aquatic invasive species regulation that would allow for prohibition of import, possession, and transport of listed aquatic invasive species, such as Asian carp, is under way, with a goal of having the draft republished in the Canada Gazette for public comments in 2014.

Funds spent to date on the program initiatives include the following: prevention, \$3,365,700; early warning, \$2,072,950; response, \$72,000; and management and control, \$120,000.

Question No. 241—**Mr. David McGuinty**:

With regard to Shared Services Canada's recent registration of telephone services, completed on January 20, 2014: (a) how many (i) traditional telephones including Voice over Internet Protocol, (ii) cellular telephones, (iii) BlackBerry devices, (iv) pagers, (v) other smartphones, were registered by Shared Service Canada employees and each of its partner organizations; and (b) how many suspensions of telephone service did this registration exercise lead to?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the current state of the telecommunications inventory as of January 28, 2014, is as follows: 194,418 traditional telephones, including voice over Internet protocol; 16,883 cellular telephones; 49,269 BlackBerry devices; 859 pagers; and 2,423 other smart phones.

The registration of telephone services and devices has been extended until February 28, 2014; as such, detailed analysis of service data will commence when the data collection phase of this activity has been completed.

With regard to (b), there have not been any suspensions of telephone lines as a result of this exercise to date. Any discontinuation of services will only occur following detailed analysis of the data collected and confirmation of the status of individual services with the SSC partner organizations.

Question No. 242—**Mr. David McGuinty**:

With regard to briefing documents prepared since July 17, 2013 for the Minister of Transport or her staff regarding Canada Post, for each document, what is: (i) the date, (ii) the title or subject matter, (iii) the Department's internal tracking number?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Transport Canada does not collect the requested information in both official languages, but rather by the language of the author. Given the large number of documents, it is not feasible for Transport Canada to translate the requested documents in the time period required.

Question No. 253—**Ms. Elizabeth May**:

With regard to the publication of draft updates to the sections of the Health of Animals Regulations concerning the transportation of farm animals within Canada: (a) will the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food take immediate steps to publish draft proposed regulatory changes in the Canada Gazette; (b) will the Minister increase funding to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to fund increased numbers of inspectors to enforce existing and future regulations; and (c) will the Minister invite the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food to examine the current crisis affecting animals in transport and to report back on the situation as it stands?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the CFIA has legislative authority for humane transportation of animals anywhere in Canada and for humane slaughter in federally registered establishments. The agency has the authority to investigate animal welfare concerns and

Routine Proceedings

alleged non-compliances within its jurisdiction and can respond to findings with a full suite of enforcement tools, including prosecution.

The CFIA remains committed to the humane treatment of animals and is pursuing the modernization of the humane transport regulations through review and stakeholder consultations to ensure that they are up to date and effective and that they reflect the latest science.

The CFIA is also updating the Meat Hygiene Manual of Procedures to reflect best practices and current scientific knowledge regarding humane treatment in the slaughter of food animals in federal establishments.

The updating of these regulatory authorities will allow the CFIA to better deal with the minority of individuals who mistreat animals.

With regard to (b), since 2008 the Government of Canada has made investments of \$517 million to fund inspector hiring, an improved inspection approach, better training, and more modern tools for front-line inspectors and increased scientific capacity.

The CFIA continues to direct resources to priority areas based on risk, compliance, and demand in order to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

With regard to (c), the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food cannot direct what studies the committee should undertake. However, the committee is free to initiate any studies relevant to its mandate and report its findings on a particular topic back to the House of Commons.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 171, 175, 177, 183, 185, 188, 189, 190, and 223 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 171—**Mr. John Rafferty**:

With regard to the Department of Veterans Affairs, what was the amount and percentage of all "lapsed spending" in the department, broken down by year from 2005 to 2013?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 175—Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:

With regard to the Canada Europe Free Trade Agreement (CETA): (a) what are the details of all tariffs which will be removed on Canadian seafood products, (i) on what date(s) will they be removed, (ii) what are the projected savings for the Canadian seafood industry; (b) what are the details of all tariffs which will be removed on European seafood products, (i) on which date(s) will they be removed, (ii) what are the projected savings for the European seafood industry; (c) what is the total number and value of Canadian seafood exports to the European Union (EU) in each year since 2006, broken down by province; (d) what is the total number and value of European seafood exports to Canada in each year since 2006; (e) what effects will the elimination of Newfoundland and Labrador's (NL) Minimum Processing Requirement (MPR) on seafood products exported to the EU have on that province's processing industry; (f) what are the details of NL's processed seafood exports to the EU by value and weight for each year since 2006; (g) has the government done any study or analysis on what the implications of the removal of the MPR will be or consulted any outside organizations or companies as to what the implications will be, and if so, what are the details of the implications; (h) how many NL processing plant employees does the government expect to be displaced due to the removal of the MPR; (i) what are the details of the \$280 million the government is providing in return for removing the MPR in NL, including (i) the programs and departments from which the money will be allocated, (ii) the details on what the money will be used for, (iii) when the money will be spent, (iv) the reasons for providing this money; (j) was the EU ban on Canadian seal products ever a part of high level discussions between the government and the EU regarding CETA and if not why not; (k) what are the details of any and all effects CETA will have on foreign ownership of Canadian fishing licenses; and (l) will CETA have any effect on small craft harbour funding, the fleet separation or owner-operator policies, controlling agreements, or any other funding, policies or programs related to fish harvesters, the fishing industry, or coastal communities in Canada?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 177—Mr. Scott Andrews:

With regard to the Department of National Defence and its commitment to the Air Cadet Flying Program: (a) what changes will take place for 2014 and what are the projected budget savings; (b) will the role of the Air Cadet League of Canada change in 2013 or 2014; (c) will the Air Transport Association of Canada play a role in the program in 2013 or 2014; (d) how many individuals participated in the Air Cadet Flying Program in each year from 2010-2013; and (e) how many individuals are projected to participate in the program for 2014 and 2015?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 183—Mr. Ted Hsu:

With regard to extradition: (a) broken down by country and by year for the past 20 years, (i) how many people have been extradited to Canada, (ii) how many requests has Canada received for extradition, (iii) how many people have been extradited from Canada, (iv) how many requests has Canada made for an individual to be extradited, (v) by year of request, how many extradition requests are still pending in Canada, (vi) by year of request, how many Canadian extradition requests are still pending abroad, (vii) what is the last step undertaken in the extradition process of cases that are still pending in Canada, (viii) what is the last step undertaken in the extradition process of Canadian cases that are still pending abroad, (ix) by country of request, what is the average delay in months from the date that extradition is sought to Canada extraditing the individual, (x) what is the average time in months from the date that extradition is sought to the individual returning to Canada, (xi) how much money has Canada spent on each extradition case litigated abroad, (xii) how much money has Canada spent on each extradition case litigated in Canada, (xiii) for each extradition request in Canada, how many judicial decisions resulted, and at which court levels; (b) what is the mean, median, and mode for number of judicial proceedings in Canada for the average extradition for the last 20 years; (c) for extradition treaties in particular, (i) with which countries does Canada have extradition treaties in place, (ii) with which countries is Canada currently negotiating extradition treaties, (iii) what is the last step undertaken in the process of treaty-making for current extradition treaty negotiations, (iv) how frequently are extradition treaties reviewed, (v) by what metrics are extradition treaties reviewed, (vi) what consultations have taken place regarding extradition treaties in the past seven years, (vii) what consultations are scheduled regarding extradition treaties, (viii) with what individuals and groups have Ministers of the Crown met regarding extradition treaties, (ix) with what individuals and groups have government departments met regarding extradition treaties, (ix) how is Parliament informed of any changes to extradition treaties, (x) by what metrics are the effectiveness of

Canada's extradition treaties evaluated, (xi) do different extradition treaties have different measures of effectiveness, and if so, how do they differ, (xii) what benefits does Canada observe from having extradition treaties, (xiii) how are the benefits in (xii) quantified, (xiv) what steps are in place to ensure consistency in application of treaties, (xv) what steps are in place to ensure consistency in enforcement of treaties, (xvi) what steps are in place to ensure consistency in effectiveness of treaties; (d) for the extradition process in particular, (i) how often is it reviewed in Canada, (ii) when was the last review completed, (iii) when is the next review scheduled, (iv) by what metrics is the effectiveness of the extradition system evaluated, (v) who determines the metrics in (iv), (vi) what steps are in place to reduce delays in the processing of an extradition case, (vii) what are the standards established for the processing of an extradition case and who establishes them, (viii) by what metrics are the standards in (vii) reviewed, (ix) when was the last review in (viii) completed, (x) when is the next review of the standards in (vii) scheduled, (xi) what is the role of Citizenship and Immigration Canada in the extradition process; (e) what metrics does Canada track with respect to extraditions and who is responsible for tracking them; (f) in what way are the provinces involved in the extradition process; (g) are the provinces being consulted with regard to any forthcoming changes, if so, in what ways; (h) regarding the Minister of Justice's August 2013 comments that there is a "need to reform and modernize how we extradite people": (i) what policies are in place to modernize the extradition process, (ii) what policies are in development to modernize the extradition process, (iii) how does the government define "modernization", (iv) by what metrics is the modernization of the extradition process tracked, (v) what steps are in place to further modernize the extradition process, (vi) what consultations have taken place regarding the modernization of the extradition process in the past year, (vii) what consultations are scheduled regarding the modernization of the extradition process, (viii) with what individuals and groups have Ministers of the Crown met with regarding the modernization of the extradition process, (ix) with what individuals and groups have government departments met with regarding the modernization process, (x) what other policies are in place to ensure that Canada has an effective and modern extradition policy; (i) what other policies are in place to ensure that Canada has an effective and modern extradition system; (j) what is involved in determining the countries to which Canada can extradite a requested individual; (k) under what circumstances does Canada reject an extradition request; (l) how is the determination in (k) made; (m) how many extradition requests has Canada refused to honour in the past 10 years, broken down by country of request and reason; (n) in what cases will Canada not seek extradition of a Canadian abroad; (o) how is the determination in (n) made; (p) what procedures exist to ensure consistency in Canada's requests or decisions not to request extradition of an individual; (q) has any study been conducted as to the impact on the extradition process (i) of an election being called in Canada and, if so, with what conclusions, (ii) of a change in government in Canada and, if so, with what conclusions; (r) what trends have been observed in the past ten years regarding the frequency of extradition requests and their processing; (s) what academic studies has Canada sought in relation to extradition within the past ten years; (t) what additional reviews or analysis of the extradition process have been completed internally by the government in the past 10 years; (u) what measures has the government undertaken to inform Canadians about the extradition process and any changes thereto; (v) how have Canada's extradition policies been relayed to international partners and what meetings have most recently occurred with Canadian officials surrounding extradition; (w) what recourse is available to individuals whom the government chooses not to extradite; (x) what recourses exist for Canada when another government refuses an extradition request; (y) how many extradition requests made by Canada in the past ten years, broken down by country, have been refused; (z) on what basis was the request in (y) refused; (aa) what was the outcome for the individuals in the cases indicated in (y); (bb) in what instances has Canada sent a diplomatic note with respect to an extradition request; (cc) what is the role of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the extradition process; (dd) how does the government ensure compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; (ee) what other international law instruments—other than extradition treaties—are involved in the extradition process; (ff) how does the government ensure compliance with the other international law instruments described in (ee); (gg) what is the history of Canada's extradition policy and what particular principles have been established to guide policy development and implementation in this regard?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 185—Hon. Judy Sgro:**

With regard to government communications since October 23, 2013: (a) for each press release containing the phrase “Harper government” issued by any government department, agency, office, Crown corporation, or other government body, what is the (i) headline or subject line, (ii) date, (iii) file or code-number, (iv) subject-matter; (b) for each such press release, was it distributed (i) on the web site of the issuing department, agency, office, Crown corporation, or other government body, (ii) on Marketwire, (iii) on Canada Newswire, (iv) on any other commercial wire or distribution service, specifying which service; and (c) for each press release distributed by a commercial wire or distribution service mentioned in (b)(ii) through (b)(iv), what was the cost of using the service?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 188—Hon. Irwin Cotler:

With regard to applications to the Minister of Justice for ministerial review of criminal convictions: (a) for each year since 2002, (i) how many applications for review of a criminal conviction were received by the Minister of Justice, (ii) of the applications received, how many preliminary assessments were completed, (iii) of applications that completed preliminary assessment, how many proceeded to the investigation stage, (iv) of completed investigations, how many applications were dismissed, (v) how many applications, and which specific ones, were granted, (vi) of applications granted, in how many cases, and in which specific ones, did the Minister direct a new trial, (vii) of applications granted, in how many cases, and in which specific ones, did the Minister refer a case to the court of appeal; (b) for each year since 2002, (i) how much funding was made available to the Criminal Conviction Review Group (CCRG) for use in the conviction review process, (ii) how much money was spent by the CCRG, (iii) how much money has been requested by the CCRG; (c) for each year since 2002, (i) how much funding was made available to the Department of Justice for use in the post-conviction review process, (ii) how much money was spent by the Department of Justice in this regard, (iii) how much money was requested by the Minister of Justice for use in this regard; (d) in the current employ of the CCRG, (i) how many individuals are lawyers; (ii) how many individuals are non-lawyers, broken down by job title, (iii) what is the employment term for the individuals in (i) and (ii); (e) for each year since 2002, (i) how many lawyers were employed by the CCRG, (ii) who was responsible for determining the staffing requirements of the CCRG, (iv) how frequently were staffing levels reviewed to ensure that they are adequate to handle the number of applications received, (v) how many CCRG staff were involved in the review of each application received by the Minister, (vi) how many applications were reviewed by each individual lawyer employed by the CCRG, (vii) broken down by case, which lawyers were assigned to which applications, (viii) of those applications reviewed by each individual lawyer employed by the CCRG, how many, and which ones, resulted in a completed preliminary review, (ix) how many resulted in a completed investigation; (f) for each year since 2002, in how many cases, and in which specific ones, did the CCRG recommend further investigation; (g) for each year since 2002, in how many investigations, and in which specific cases, did the CCRG, (i) interview or examine witnesses, (ii) carry out scientific testing, (iii) obtain assessments from forensic and social science specialists, (iv) consult police agencies in connection with the specific investigation, (v) consult prosecutors in connection with the specific investigation, (vi) consult defence lawyers in connection with the specific investigation, (vii) obtain any other relevant information or documentation; (h) for each year since 2002, (i) in how many cases, and in which ones, did the CCRG produce an investigation report, (ii) in how many cases, and in which ones, did the applicant provide comments on an investigation report, (iii) in how many cases, and in which specific ones, did the CCRG conduct further investigation based on an applicant's comments to an investigation report, (iv) in how many cases, and in which specific ones, did the Special Advisor produce advice or make a recommendation to the Minister that differed from the advice or recommendation contained in the CCRG's investigation report, (v) in how many cases, and in which specific ones, did the Minister make a determination that differed from the investigation report, (vi) in how many cases, and in which specific ones, did the Minister make a determination that differed from the Special Advisor; (i) Regarding the “new matters of significance” test, (i) is it currently necessary that an application for review of a criminal conviction be supported by “new matters of significance” in order for it to proceed to the preliminary assessment stage, (ii) in order for it to proceed to investigation, (iii) in order for the Minister to allow the application; (j) regarding the “new matters of significance” test, (i) has the test been applied the same way in each year since 2002, (ii) if not, how has its application changed, (iii) are there any cases, and if so which ones, where an application proceeded to any stage of the review process without having adduced “new matters of significance”, (iv) what is the meaning of the term “new matters of significance” in the context of the ministerial review process, (v) for

an application to proceed, must it be supported by “fresh evidence” not available at the time of trial, (vi) can an application for review proceed based on evidence that existed, but was not reasonably discoverable at the time of trial, (vii) can an application for review proceed based on evidence that reasonably could have been, but was not, discovered by the applicant at the time of trial; (k) for each year since 2002, in how many cases, and in which specific ones, did the Minister waive privilege regarding an investigation report; (l) broken down by year since 2002 and by case, in which cases did the Minister, (i) determine there to be a conflict of interest, (ii) in those cases where the Minister determined there to be a conflict of interest, in which specific instances did the Minister authorize an agent outside of the department of Justice or the CCRG to carry out the investigation; (m) broken down by year since 2002 and by case, in which cases, and to whom, did the Minister (i) delegate his powers to take evidence, (ii) delegate his powers to issue subpoenas, (iii) delegate his powers to enforce the attendance of witnesses, (iv) delegate his powers to compel a witness to give evidence, (v) delegate his powers to otherwise conduct an investigation and, if so, what specific powers were delegated; (n) regarding the requirement under section 696.5 of the Criminal Code that the Minister of Justice submit an annual report to Parliament regarding applications for ministerial review, (i) what are the requirements pertaining to the compilation and submission of the annual report, (ii) where are these requirements contained, (iii) have these requirements changed since 2002 and, if so, when and in what specific ways were they changed, (iv) what requirements for publication exist, if any, (v) what is the process for dissemination of the report; (o) regarding the requirement under section 7 (f) of the Regulations Respecting Applications for Ministerial Review that the Minister include in his annual report “any other information that [he] considers appropriate”, (i) what guidelines exist for determining what information is appropriate for inclusion in the report under this element of the Regulations, (ii) what aspects of each ministerial report submitted pursuant to section 696.5 of the Criminal Code since 2002 was included as a result of the Minister's determination that it is appropriate for inclusion under section 7(f) of the Regulations Respecting Applications for Ministerial Review; (p) broken down by year since 2000, how many Canadian Commissions of Inquiry into wrongful convictions have recommended the further study or implementation of an independent commission to assume the powers of the Minister of Justice to investigate and refer cases of suspected miscarriages of justice for judicial re-consideration; (q) broken down by specific Commission of Inquiry, (i) which specific foreign review mechanisms have been examined as potential models to reform the current Canadian post-conviction review regime, (ii) what actions have been taken to implement the findings or suggestions of the commission of inquiry, (iii) has the government consulted with any stakeholders regarding the possibility of implementing an independent commission of inquiry to assume the powers of the Minister of Justice in this regard, (iv) what specific stakeholders were consulted in this regard and when, (v) with which provinces has the government consulted in this regard, (vi) with which provincial bar associations has the government consulted in this regard, (vii) with which provincial Attorneys General did the government consult in this regard, (viii) has the government engaged in any analysis of the comparative costs associated with the current ministerial review process compared to a possible independent review commission; (r) what specific steps is the government undertaking to minimize the incidence of wrongful conviction; (s) what efforts have been made to implement the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group reports in respect of wrongful conviction; (t) what efforts are made to inform Canadians of their options with respect to addressing what they believe to be a wrongful conviction or other miscarriage of justice; (u) with respect to the government's website entitled “Conviction Review” (<http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/cr-rc/rev.html>), last updated on April 30, 2013, what changes were made on this date and what are the three previous versions of this page; (v) by what means is the wrongful conviction process as a whole reviewed by the government and what metrics are tracked with respect to it; and (w) regarding the 2004 Annual Report, in which the then-Minister of Justice stated that “although it is not required, applicants are encouraged to seek the assistance of counsel,” (i) when was the language “encouraged to seek the assistance of counsel” removed from the Annual Report, (ii) whose decision was it to remove this language and on what basis, (iii) when was this change implemented, (iv) did this change further a specific policy objective, (v) what policy objective did this change further, (vi) is there any difference in the success rates of pro bono applications compared to applications submitted with legal assistance and what is the difference, (vii) has the Department of Justice called for greater access to legal assistance for those submitting applications for ministerial review of their criminal convictions?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 189—Hon. Irwin Cotler:

With regard to Canadians detained abroad: (a) broken down by year for each of the last 15 years, and broken down by country of arrest, charge, or detention, (i) how many Canadians have been arrested outside of Canada, (ii) how many Canadians have been detained outside of Canada, (iii) how many Canadians detained outside of Canada have been charged with an offence, (iv) how many Canadians have been detained without charge outside of Canada; (b) broken down by country of arrest, charge or detention, (i) how many Canadians are currently detained outside of Canada, (ii) how many Canadians currently face charges outside of Canada, (iii) how many Canadians are currently detained without charge outside of Canada; (c) for each instance in (a) and (b), (i) which representatives of the government met with the individual charged or detained, (ii) on what dates did these meetings occur, (iii) what other communication, if any, occurred between the government and the individual, (iv) through what medium did this communication occur, (vii) what was the purpose of each of these meetings and communications, (viii) what was the outcome of each of these meetings and communications; (d) for each instance in (a) and (b), (i) which representatives of the government contacted family members of the individual charged or detained, (ii) on what dates were these family members contacted by the government, (iii) which representatives of the government were contacted by family members of the individual charged or detained, (iv) on what dates did the family members contact the government, (v) through what medium did each contact between the government and the family members of the individual charged or detained occur, (vi) what was the purpose of each communication between the government and the family members of the individual charged or detained, (vii) what was the outcome of each communication between the government and the family members of the individual charged or detained; (e) regarding each instance in (a) and (b), (i) what non-governmental organizations were contacted by the government, (ii) on what dates were these organizations contacted by the government, (iii) which representatives of the government contacted these organizations, (iv) what non-governmental organizations contacted the government, (v) on what dates did these organizations contact the government, (vi) which representatives of the government were contacted by these organizations, (vii) through what medium did each contact between the government and a non-governmental organization occur, (viii) what was the purpose of each communication between the government and the non-governmental organization, (ix) what was the outcome of each communication between the government and the non-governmental organization, (x) what assistance did non-governmental organizations offer to provide to the government, to the Canadian, or to the Canadian's family, (xi) in what ways did non-governmental organizations assist in providing services to the Canadian arrested, charged, or detained, or to his or her family, (xii) in what ways did non-governmental organizations assist in securing or attempting to secure the release or extradition of the Canadian, (xiii) what other assistance did the non-governmental organization provide; (f) regarding each instance in (a) and (b), (i) what representations were made by the government to the government of the country in which the Canadian was arrested, charged or detained, (ii) on what dates were these representations made, (iii) which representatives of the government made these representations, (iv) through what medium were these representations made, (v) what response did the government receive from the government of the country in which the Canadian was arrested, charged or detained, (vi) which representatives of the government received the response, (vii) through what medium was the response delivered, (viii) which representatives of the government of the country in which the Canadian was charged or detained responded to the government's representations, (ix) what was the purpose of each representation made by the government to the government of the country in which the Canadian was charged or detained, (x) what was the outcome of each representation made by the government to the government of the country in which the Canadian was charged or detained, (xi) what other communications did the government receive, solicited or otherwise, from the government of the country in which the Canadian was arrested, charged or detained; (g) regarding each instance in (a) and (b), (i) what governments of third-party countries were contacted by the government, (ii) on what dates were the governments of third-party countries contacted by the government, (iii) which representatives of the government contacted the governments of the third-party countries, (iv) what governments of third-party countries contacted the government, (v) on what dates did the governments of third-party countries contact the government, (vi) which representatives of the government were contacted by the governments of third-party countries, (vii) through what medium did each of these contacts occur, (viii) what was the purpose of each contact between the government and the government of a third-party country, (ix) what was the outcome of each contact between the government and the government of a third-party country, (x) what assistance did governments of third-party countries offer to provide to the government, to the Canadian, or to the Canadian's family, (xi) in what ways did governments of third-party countries assist in providing services to the Canadian arrested, charged or detained, or to his or her family, (xii) in what ways did governments of third-party countries assist in securing or attempting to secure the

release or extradition of the Canadian, (xiii) what other assistance did the governments of third-party countries provide; (h) at the time of their arrest, charge, or detention, which Canadians in (a) and (b) had (i) Canadian citizenship, (ii) Canadian permanent resident status, (iii) other status in Canada; (i) for each instance in (a), (i) does the Canadian remain detained outside of Canada, (ii) is the Canadian currently detained in Canada, (iii) was the Canadian extradited to Canada, (iv) was the Canadian released by the country in which he or she was arrested, charged, or detained, (v) was the Canadian released after being extradited to Canada, (vi) did the Canadian die in the custody of the country in which he or she was arrested, charged, or detained, (vii) did the Canadian die in Canadian custody, (viii) is the Canadian's status unknown; (j) for each instance in (a) and (b), (i) on what date did the government learn that the Canadian had been arrested, charged or detained, (ii) which representative of the government first learned that the Canadian had been arrested, charged, or detained, (iii) how did that representative learn that the Canadian had been arrested, charged, or detained; (k) for each instance in (a) and (b), was the arrest, charge, or detention determined by the government to be consistent with (i) Canadian norms, (ii) international norms, (iii) the norms of the country in which the Canadian was arrested, charged, or detained; (l) for each instance in (a) and (b), based on what information did the government determine whether the arrest, charge, or detention was consistent with (i) Canadian norms, (ii) international norms, (iii) the norms of the country in which the Canadian was arrested, charged, or detained; (m) for each instance in (a) and (b), based on what criteria did the government determine whether the arrest, charge, or detention was consistent with (i) Canadian norms, (ii) international norms, (iii) the norms of the country in which the Canadian was arrested, charged, or detained; (n) for each instance in (a) and (b), (i) who made the determinations in (k), (ii) when did the process of making the determinations in (k) begin, (iii) when were the determinations made; (o) for each instance in (b), (i) what actions is the government taking to ensure that the Canadian's rights are respected, (ii) what actions is the government taking to ensure that the Canadian receives a fair trial, (iii) what actions is the government taking to ensure that the Canadian is treated humanely, (iv) what actions is the government taking to secure the Canadian's release, (v) what actions is the government taking to secure the Canadian's extradition?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 190—Mr. Kennedy Stewart:

With regard to the sale of the CANDU Reactor Division of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited to SNC-Lavalin Group Inc. during June 2011: (a) what was the government's economic rationale and business case in support of this sale; (b) what government documents contained, outlined, or presented this economic rationale and business case; (c) what were the full titles of the documents in (b); (d) by whom were the documents in (b) prepared; (e) on what dates were the documents in (b) prepared; (f) on what dates were the documents in (b) presented to the Minister of Natural Resources; (g) what documents did SNC-Lavalin Group Inc. provide the government in support of this sale; (h) what were the full titles of the documents in (g); (i) by whom were the documents in (g) prepared; (j) who submitted the documents in (g) to the government; (k) on what dates were the documents in (g) prepared; (l) on what dates were the documents in (g) presented to the Minister of Natural Resources (m) what due diligence was applied by the government in order to verify the factual content of the documents in (g)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 223—Ms. Isabelle Morin:

With regard to the Bouchard Stream in Dorval, Quebec: (a) what environmental monitoring has been conducted on the health of this waterway; (b) what efforts has the government made to analyze the impact of Trudeau Airport on this waterway; (c) what efforts has the government made to ensure that the operator of the airport, Aéroports de Montréal, is complying with applicable acts and regulations pertaining to environmental issues, including, but not limited to, the Canadian Fisheries Act and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act; (d) does the government's policy call for the introduction of (i) enforcement mechanisms, (ii) legislation to address Aéroports de Montréal's impact on this waterway; and (e) has this waterway been designated as protected by the government at any time, (i) if so, under which acts (including the current Navigable Waters Protection Act) and during which years, (ii) if not, why was it not considered to warrant protection by the government?

(Return tabled)

Government Orders

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

QALIPU MI'KMAQ FIRST NATION ACT

BILL C-25—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-25, An Act respecting the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band Order, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the Bill; and that 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

• (1010)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is incredible. What the government House leader has done is to blatantly and obviously sabotage the testimony that is forthcoming in just 50 minutes from the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Mayrand, at committee. What is he testifying about? He is testifying about the unfair elections act introduced by the Conservatives.

At every step along the way, the Conservatives have chosen cynicism over any scrape of democratic value. Today they introduced time allocation on a first nations treaty that we agree with. We had a small amount of debate last Friday. Our critic on first nations issues has yet to speak to the bill, and today the government has introduced time allocation to censure and shut down debate on a first nations treaty.

These guys lecture first nations about accountability. Conservatives lecture first nations communities and leaders about democratic values on first nations reserves. They have the audacity to lecture first nations people, when they show such hypocrisy as to use a bill to enact a first nations treaty to block the Chief Electoral Officer from testifying in Parliament.

It would be tragically ironic and funny, if it did not actually affect the things that matter most to Canadians, which is our ability to freely and fairly vote.

This time allocation motion introduced today is cynicism at its worst, from a government that has become so desperate that it has to invent evidence to support its badly flawed reform of our electoral laws. Then, as the Prime Minister said yesterday, if one of the Conservative MPs gets caught not telling the truth in Parliament and is forced to admit it, we should not condemn him but celebrate him. We should say what a terrific fellow he is for having been caught making up facts about something as important as reforming our electoral laws.

This is what it is, and nothing else. It is a cynical attempt to sabotage the testimony of Mr. Mayrand in front of a public hearing, a public committee, which is trying to understand the cynical move to not only muzzle him, but to disenfranchise Canadians from their right to vote.

When is it going to be too much for these so-called Conservatives, who used to believe in some principles of democratic values?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to that charade, and it confirms something. The hon. member was referring to the fair elections act, which the official opposition stated, before reading the bill, that it would oppose. Now I am tempted to conclude that he has not even looked at Bill C-25 because he is referring to it as relating to a first nations treaty. He is totally wrong.

This is not about a treaty; it is about an agreement entered into between Canada and the Newfoundland first nation, the Qalipu Mi'kmaq. This bill is about protecting the integrity of a process to ensure that the Qalipu Mi'kmaq first nation is finally constituted according to the agreement that has been reached with the first nation.

[Translation]

Bill C-25 is necessary to ensure that the original intent of the 2008 Agreement for the Recognition of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band is respected, and that the 2013 Supplemental Agreement can be implemented.

The purpose of the legislation currently before the House is to support the implementation of the 2008 Agreement for the Recognition of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band and the 2013 Supplemental Agreement between the federal government and the Federation of Newfoundland Indians.

Clearly, the opposition's partisan tactics and the busy parliamentary schedule mean that we will have to allocate some time to pass this bill, considering our full legislative agenda, which will only become busier in the months ahead.

• (1015)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we begin questions and comments, I think everyone knows the proper practice here, which is to try to limit the questions to one minute and the answers to a similar length. I will advise the member for Winnipeg North that I give extra leeway in the first round of questions from the two opposition parties. However, after that, the questions and answers will be limited to one minute each.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this debate we are having right now is not about his bill. The debate is about the process and manner in which the government has, once again, decided to bring in a time-allocated bill, and its motivation in doing so at this time.

Government Orders

At 11:00 this morning, we are supposed to have the Chief Electoral Officer make a presentation to the committee on an important piece of legislation. The minister made reference to the fair elections act, but it is more the Conservative elections act. However, we are potentially putting at risk the comments from the Chief Electoral Officer in committee, by a tactical move made today in regard to bringing in time allocation. That is important for us to recognize.

It is important for us to realize that ever since we have had this Conservative majority government, the Conservatives have had a different attitude in terms of the way in which the House of Commons is run, and it is not very democratic; it is disgraceful.

My question to the minister and government House leader is, why do we see this change in attitude from a majority Conservative government that prevents members of Parliament from contributing, in a healthy way, a constructive way, to debate inside the House? That is what this motion is doing.

One, the motion is putting in a finite number, which means that a very limited number of MPs will be able to contribute to the debate; and, two, the Conservatives are potentially putting at risk the Chief Electoral Officer's ability to speak at committee, which is supposed to be starting within 45 minutes.

My question is, why?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, if members are so concerned about what will happen at 11 o'clock, they only have to call for a voice vote on this so it does not interrupt the committee hearing.

Regarding the member's question, he was talking about this majority government. Thanks to this majority government, it has been able to pass measures that have resulted in the creation of over one million jobs in Canada since the end of the recession. Plus, this government has taken other steps to ensure that Canada performs well for the benefit of its citizens and taxpayers.

We are here today to discuss this motion, which is to allocate time for the passage of this bill. The opposition members should perhaps simply acknowledge that in order for Canada and the Mi'kmaq first nation of Newfoundland to respect the agreement it has entered into, this technical bill should be passed presto to ensure the process can move forward so these people can get their status, which they deserve.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is really shocking to hear the outrageous remarks made by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. He has no problem taking legitimate representatives of the Canadian population hostage, to try to advance his own personal agenda.

I know this for a fact, because the people of Beauport—Limoilou are suffering the consequences of this wilful blindness, or what is really this government's refusal to accept any responsibility for the dust contamination problem. My team and I have learned that the Conservative Party received nearly \$20,000 in contributions just from people at Arrimage Québec. This illustrates the real issues involved in this debate. Indeed, the Conservatives are definitely not putting Canadians first; they always put their friends first.

When will the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development start taking care of Canadians first?

• (1020)

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, there is no greater example of a political party that could not care less about the situation facing the Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland. We are discussing a motion on Bill C-25, and the member is talking about dust in Quebec City. Unbelievable.

What we are doing here is deciding whether we will adopt the motion to ensure Bill C-25 goes to the next stage. People in committee will be able to discuss the benefits of the bill, which is simply intended to implement the measures needed to protect the integrity of the enrolment process for the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation in Newfoundland.

[*English*]

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could the minister clarify why this legislation is needed, what process led to the legislation, and why it is important to send the bill to committee and on to royal assent as expeditiously as possible?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, the member asked an important question. Bill C-25 is necessary to ensure that the intent of the 2008 agreement for the recognition of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq band and the 2013 supplemental agreement can be implemented. This legislation is intended to support the implementation of the 2008 agreement and the supplemental agreement of last summer, which we entered into with the Federation of Newfoundland Indians. The supplemental agreement addresses the shared concerns of both the first nation and Canada about the integrity of the enrolment process.

Bill C-25 is required to complete the enrolment process outlined in the supplemental agreement, which was the product of extensive discussions and negotiations with the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and which we would like both parties on the other side of the House to support.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The bill was introduced on Tuesday. Today is the beginning of business on Thursday. I appreciate the fact that the minister responsible is in a hurry to get something done. He wants to bypass the rules, but there are rules established for debate of legislation in the House for a reason. Once legislation is passed, it affects the lives of all those people covered by the legislation, and it is very difficult to amend legislation once it has been passed. Therefore, it is extremely important that we have a full discussion of each item and that we are able to take the time to consider the legislation and discuss the implications with our constituents and other groups who are affected by it so we can bring those insights to bear.

I know that the members opposite like to give short shrift to issues regarding first nations people in our country, but I think the Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland and Labrador deserve to have this issue fully discussed in a thoughtful and constructive manner in the House. The fact that the government has some other agenda it is bringing to bear is simply not fair or just to the issues that affect first nations and the Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland.

If the minister is trying to establish a sense of respect and responsibility with the Mi'kmaq and first nations in the country, why is it that on an important piece of legislation that is meant to deal with a historic problem, he wants to restrict debate by other members in the House? Why will he not allow a full discussion?

• (1025)

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, this motion reflects our conviction that a full day to study a bill with four sections is plenty of time to deal with the technical nature of the bill. This is not about whether or not an agreement will be respected. This is about ensuring that the will of that first nation, which concluded this agreement with Canada, is implemented.

I cannot see why we would need weeks or days to discuss a four section bill. I suggest that the NDP get to work and that we get this bill passed.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment and ask a question.

I listened very carefully to the minister's comments on what happened this morning and on the possibility that the Chief Electoral Officer's appearance in committee will have to be cancelled. He implied that if the House did not hold a recorded vote, the Chief Electoral Officer could possibly have a chance to testify before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs this morning.

On our side, we accept that recommendation. We have no intention of rising to demand a recorded division. We would accept a decision on division.

Now for my question. We have been discussing this issue for years and we have negotiated. Now, the government has introduced a bill. We only had one opportunity to discuss it last Friday. However, the government has once again decided to issue a gag order, as usual. The official opposition has indicated that it supports this bill. We will not even get a chance to constructively debate this bill before it is passed.

Why did the minister not have the decency to consider referring the bill to committee before second reading stage?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my hon. colleague for his suggestion. I hope it will be shared by our friends in the official opposition.

As for whether we should adopt this motion, I would say that the additional sitting day that will be provided for the consideration of the bill at second reading will allow it to be sent immediately thereafter to the standing committee, which can debate it more thoroughly and examine the four clauses in much greater detail.

I do not believe the bill needs to be sent to committee before that. Let us proceed with second reading of the bill, and the legislative process will then run its course.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am always stunned by how little respect all Conservative members seem to have for their duties as members of Parliament and the privilege of representing their constituents. I am always surprised to see that they do not care about representing their constituents.

Government Orders

Here in the House of Commons, it is our duty to represent our constituents and to ensure that we can debate this bill properly.

I would like to ask the minister why he is ignoring his duty and showing no respect for what a privilege it is to be here in the House of Commons.

• (1030)

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, I am always astounded by the NDP members who believe that it is in the interests of Canada, its taxpayers and its workers to have MPs here just for the sake of making sure that government bills are not passed.

As we saw again this week, the NDP members are perfectly happy to waste time in the House. They are perfectly happy to ensure that no progress is made on any bills. We, on this side of the House, we were elected to take measures to help taxpayers, our constituents and people throughout Canada. That is exactly what we are doing.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is confusing to me when time and again opposition members ask for more time to discuss, debate, and study various bills and then use all of that time either filibustering at committee or wasting time here in the House of Commons talking about process. They do not want to discuss the issues.

I had the honour of serving on the aboriginal affairs and northern development committee when I first arrived here a number of years ago. I am proud of the advancements our government has made on many initiatives that have helped our first nations people address the terrible situations in the lives.

In the last number of years, I have not had the privilege of serving on that committee, so I have not studied this bill as much as I would have liked. I have a question for the minister regarding the liability clause. Would the minister address why it is important to restore the integrity of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq first nation? If he could address that, it would help me a lot.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that we at least have some members who are interested in the substance of the bill.

The inclusion of the liability clause in clause 4 of the bill provides certainty that no compensation or damages would be paid either by Canada, the first nation, or any other party to those individuals who it is determined are not members of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq first nation once the enrolment process has been completed. I would add that this clause would not prevent individuals from pursuing whatever other remedy they wanted. However, they would not obtain the benefits of status Indians if they were not status Indians.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it would seem as if we have another case of "here we go again". It is pretty clear that what is going on here is an attempt to disrupt the presentation of the Chief Electoral Officer at 11 o'clock, which already is going to be pushed off as a result of this motion and the vote.

Government Orders

Again, we see the government bringing in not only an unfair election act but also an undemocratic process around it, and that is what is going on right here. We cut an honourable deal with the government, at least I thought it was an honourable deal. It was honourable on my part and it was certainly honourable on the part of the member for Winnipeg Centre when we made a deal with the government about what would happen with the Chief Electoral Officer.

I know the Speaker is going to bring me to relevancy in a moment, and I have some recent experience with that.

My question for the minister is this. Is he not embarrassed that his own government is manipulating his bill and his issue in order to achieve an undemocratic process and deny the Chief Electoral Officer the chance to come in and give 90 minutes of uninterrupted witness testimony? Is he not embarrassed by this?

• (1035)

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, the record will show that if this does not take place at 11 o'clock, it is simply because the New Democrats will have insisted on a nominal vote. If they want this to go ahead, all they have to do is pass this motion by a voice vote and that will solve the issue.

To the member's question, my answer is no.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us understand this. The government, throughout the history of its unfair election act, has attempted at every point not only to muzzle the Chief Electoral Officer but to deny Canadians even some modicum of consultation and respect. Now, the Conservatives take a first nations agreement and hold that up as a technique to sabotage the Chief Electoral Officer's coming in and testifying, and then attempt to blame all this on the opposition; then attempt to say that this is all of them being victims.

The bill has been in the House for a couple of hours and then the Conservatives introduced time allocation and shut down debate. They then had the audacity to lecture first nations on their lack of respect and accountability. How dare they use an issue as important as first nations' rights and title in this country to then shut down the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada and deny Canadians even that small amount of respect after so much disrespect shown to the people who put us here to represent them each and every day?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, I see that the conspiracy theory of the member's leader is rampant among the benches of the NDP.

The experienced hon. member has not alluded to the fact that if he wants this absolutely to take place at 11 o'clock, he can simply not insist on a nominal vote. I will again invite the hon. member to agree that a full day of debate will be enough to deal with four sections of a technical bill.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, here is the promise the government can quickly make. It is that, after this little bit of sabotage work this morning, the Conservatives will not introduce another time allocation motion on a separate piece of legislation. We noticed some strange coincidence last night, that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons got to his feet and said that the Conservatives had two motions in which they would like to shut

down debate on two pieces of legislation. By coincidence, the timing would allow them, not once but twice, to interrupt the Chief Electoral Officer's testimony, which as my colleague from Hamilton said, was an agreement worked out between us and the government, in good faith.

Something we need to learn on the NDP side is that good faith between Conservatives and anybody is something we just cannot trust. Do the Conservative members not understand how far they have drifted from the basic tenets of democratic values, how far and how cynical they have become that they are willing to use the House of Commons to block the Chief Electoral Officer and say that this is a proper way to run the country's affairs?

We have had a couple of hours of debate on this thing. Our key critic on this issue has yet to even speak to the bill. We have offered support for the legislation, and the Conservatives are using it, and the member is being used and he must know it. He must know that his government is cynically putting him up. It is much as they did with the member from Mississauga, to perpetrate mistruths in the House, and it is all to justify the unfair election act; all to muzzle the Chief Electoral Officer; and going into the future, all to disenfranchise Canadians from their democratic rights.

That is the game the member is playing a part in today. He should take some ownership of it.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, the member's offensive comments are so unfounded that they do not even warrant a response.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: We have time for one more quick question.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, a short question.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, let me try it again. He does not deign to have a response to questions we pose to him. I asked him a very specific question, how comfortable he was being used by his own government, presenting some issue of importance, as the Conservatives did the other day, but as a shield to block something that is critical.

The other day it was on a privilege motion where a member had been caught telling mistruths to the House. The government used procedural tactics. The monkey wrench gang of the Conservative Party is back. We all remember the manual it had to shut committees down. This is its new tactic, not just shutting down committees in committee, but using the House of Commons, using first nations rights and title legislation, in order to accomplish the same cynical means.

• (1040)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development now has 25 seconds.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, all the time has been taken by the hon. member to say nothing about the motion before the House. I trust, then, that the hon. member and his colleagues will support this motion to allocate one more day of debate on Bill C-25, so it can be sent to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

[Translation]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1120)

[English]

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

(Division No. 78)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal

Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Preston
Reid
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Vancouver South)

Government Orders

Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
James
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Poillievre
Raïtt
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 150

NAYS

Members

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Caron
Cash
Chisholm
Christopherson
Comartin
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Freeman
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jones
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)

Government Orders

LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Martin
Masse	Mathyssen
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sitsabaiesan	
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Tremblay
Turmel	Valeriote — 118

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADA-HONDURAS ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT

BILL C-20—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-20, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, not more than one further sitting day after the day on which this order is adopted shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the bill; and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government orders on the day allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

[*English*]

The Speaker: In accordance with Standing Order 67(1), there will now be a 30-minute question period. I will ask members to keep their questions to around a minute and the responses from the minister to a similar length of time.

The hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

• (1125)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am astonished. Just minutes ago, the government said it would not force a vote. Then, again, it flipped. The minister—maybe the House

leader was not aware; maybe they do not talk, but I suspect they do—said the government would not force a vote.

Here we are, yet again, with time allocation. Why? It is not about trying to get legislation through; it is about trying to actually muzzle debate on the Chief Electoral Officer.

The current government does not even care anymore. In fact, the Conservatives are all laughing. There are smiles, right across the bench, because they think how great it is that they are going to muzzle the Chief Electoral Officer—and to do what? To present his evidence on his concerns about what? About our democracy.

We have the House leader working with the front bench, including the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, who pretended to think that we were going to buy his argument that he would not force the vote, which the government then did. That is what it did. Why? So that the government could shut down debate on the Chief Electoral Officer. And they smile. They think this is great.

My question for our friend across the way is, is this what we are going to do in our democracy from here on with the current government? Is it going to continue with time allocation on every bill so that not only are we going to shut down debate on important bills but also muzzle people from bearing witness in committee?

Further, my final question is, can we trust the current government on its word when we make a deal with it to have people present at committee? I guess not. What is this—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I gather when their poll numbers start plummeting, they see conspiracies everywhere with a desperate effort to seek blame somewhere else than in themselves for the fact they are lacking any appeal among the public.

As the members opposite know, the only time of day I can make this motion is now, when orders of the day are called.

As for the committee, it can schedule its affairs whenever it wants. If it wishes to hear the witness for longer, it can organize its affairs to do that. It has full flexibility.

If the members opposite did not want the last vote to occur, which disrupted the committee business, they could very easily have allowed the motion to pass on division. They chose not to allow the motion to pass on division.

The greatest irony at all is that these are the people who are saying, “Why won’t you let Marc Mayrand be heard?”. For a week and a half, the member for Hamilton Centre filibustered that committee, keeping that person from being heard.

Government Orders

The government was trying to get that witness before committee. The opposition were proud of how they spent a week and a half keeping him from appearing. Now he can appear. The committee can arrange its affairs however it wants.

However, for the member opposite to suddenly say that it is our fault that the witness was blocked for a week and a half is preposterous.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the government House leader's comments regarding the issue of division.

What we know for sure is that at the last opportunity we indicated, within the Liberal Party, that we would like to see it on division. We opposed that time allocation. We oppose this time allocation. We want to be able to see it on division, primarily because we, within the Liberal Party, recognize that it is critically important to allow the Chief Electoral Officer to make his presentation.

On Tuesday night, there was a commitment, an agreement made between myself, the NDP, and the Conservatives, that would have guaranteed that 90 minutes.

There is a way we can do this. We have a good sense of what the outcome is going to be after the vote of the next time allocation.

May I suggest that we do a vote on division. The Liberals will be in opposition to that vote. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, and maybe it would be inappropriate to ask this of you, that you canvass the House after I sit down, to see if there is unanimous consent of the House that would allow us to stop asking questions right now and go right to the vote of the time allocation on division so that we could go to the committee and have the Chief Electoral Officer make his presentation.

I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to ask for that unanimous consent so that we can get to committee.

• (1130)

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Winnipeg North is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to, in effect, abbreviate the debate and move directly to a vote that would go on division. Does the hon. member have unanimous consent for the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

An hon. member: Who said no?

The Deputy Speaker: I heard noes from both sides of the House. I will put it again. Does the member for Winnipeg North have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I heard at least four noes from this side of the House. I think the issue has been determined.

Does the Minister of International Trade wish to respond to the member for Winnipeg North? The minister has the floor.

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it should surprise no one in the House; in fact, it should surprise no Canadian, that the opposition would be opposing this government's trade and investment agenda.

I am going to take the opposition parties down memory lane, back to when we were negotiating the Colombia free trade agreement. When that agreement was tabled in the House, it took two and a half years to get it passed in the House. Why? It was because the opposition parties were filibustering the bill. Those members do not understand trade. They do not like trade. They have opposed virtually every trade agreement Canada has ever signed. For them to now get up in the House and suggest that they want a robust debate on trade belies their underlying anti-trade ideology.

Let me talk about the Honduras trade agreement that is the subject of this time allocation motion. There has already been debate on this. These negotiations started back in 2000, close to 15 years ago. In 2009, we focused on Honduras. It has taken this long to get this agreement into the House. There already has been robust debate. Let us get on with opening up new trade opportunities all around the world.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is simply outrageous. The Minister of International Trade is defending the government's move to curtail debate on a Canada-Honduras trade deal after half a day of debate.

The government talks about opening negotiations in 2009, which is ironic because in 2009 a military coup in Honduras overthrew the government. Every government in the world recognized that the government was illegitimate except the Conservatives, who rushed to sign a trade agreement. They rushed to sign a trade agreement with an undemocratic government that is one of the worst human rights abusers in the world and the most dangerous place for journalists on the planet. There is no freedom of expression in Honduras. There is no freedom of association. Seventy-nine per cent of all cocaine shipments in South America land in Honduras.

The Conservative government is afraid to debate those facts in the House because it knows that the Canadian people would not support an agreement with a country like Honduras that is a human rights—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I would remind all members on both sides of the House to limit their questions and answers to one minute.

The hon. Minister of International Trade.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, the only part of that tirade that I would agree with is that Honduras is coming out of a very troubled past. Canada's record on the international stage is to provide countries like Honduras with a hand up to help them, to walk side-by-side with them, to help them escape from a troubled past.

• (1135)

Mr. Don Davies: But it is all true.

Mr. Peter Julian: I suggest the member read the human rights reports.

Government Orders

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, we can hear NDP members heckling in the House. They do not care about Honduras. They do not care about the poor in Honduras. They are so ideologically stuck in a straitjacket that they just cannot escape it. That is why they have opposed virtually every trade agreement Canada has ever signed. In fact, for every new trade agreement they come up with a new excuse not to support it.

In 2009, Honduras expressed an interest in negotiating a trade agreement with Canada, separate and apart from the Central American Four. In good faith, we moved forward with those negotiations and they were concluded.

In November of this past year, over four months ago, that agreement was tabled in the House, and the NDP has had ample opportunity to review it. There has been lots of discussion in public about this agreement. We have had debate in the House and, in fact, we are debating it right now.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the creation of jobs and economic growth for the benefit of Canadian businesses, workers, and families continues to be the focus of our Conservative government. That is why we will continue to deliver pro-export leadership. I find the way hard-working Canadian families are being portrayed by the NDP very unfortunate as they vote against each free trade agreement.

Could the Minister of International Trade please explain how the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would benefit Canadian workers and their families?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, ever since being elected in 2006, our government has focused on the economy and on building prosperity in Canada. A very significant part of that effort is to use trade and investment to drive economic growth in Canada. We do so by opening up new opportunities around the world through free trade agreements, through bilateral investment treaties, and through air transport agreements.

What we do with our trading partners is engage with them. Some of those partners are coming out of very troubled pasts, so what do we do? There are two choices. We can either isolate countries such as Honduras, the way the NDP wants to do, and treat them like pariahs when they ask for help, or we can engage with them. Our choice has been to engage, walk with them through very difficult times, and help them improve their prosperity.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I arrived here on Monday I did not have voice mail messages about the trade deal with Honduras. I did not have emails. I was not overwhelmed. I did not call my staff together and say, “Quick, put together a briefing, because this is going to be the number one issue that we have to deal with this week.”

What I did have were phone calls and emails about the unfair elections act, to be frank, and a lot about Canada Post. Those were the issues I thought we would be talking about this week. Those are the issues I thought were the most pressing and urgent, the ones I needed to read up on and get up to speed on with everything, not this trade deal.

I cannot believe how transparent the actions of the government are today in trying to disrupt the testimony of the Chief Electoral Officer, Marc Mayrand, at committee. I know the minister will say, “What committee does is what committee does; I have no control”, but we know that it is all organized centrally. It is like the Borg: “I am Borg, I am Conservative.”

Will the minister agree to bring back the Chief Electoral Officer when we return from our riding weeks to provide testimony again at committee?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, that is ridiculous. The motion before us is a time allocation motion relating to the Honduras free trade agreement. That is what I am going to focus on.

However, it is not surprising that the NDP does not consider Honduras important. In fact, it does not consider the Americas to be important. Let me quote a statement made by my friend across the way, the member for Vancouver Kingsway. As he was describing the importance of the Americas to Canada, he said that countries like Colombia, Honduras, Peru, Chile, Costa Rica, and Panama are ...not key economies with any kind of strategic value for Canada.”

The Americas are of no importance to the NDP because it does not understand trade. In fact, the combined economies of those countries I mentioned are equivalent to almost a trillion dollars worth of GDP. Does Canada want to engage with that region of the world? Of course we do. We want to engage with Honduras, and with Costa Rica, Panama, Chile, Peru, and Colombia. Those are trading partners we do want to engage with.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the international trade champion.

He accused us of suggesting that Honduras is not much of a priority, but I think he sees Japan as even less of a priority. I travelled to Japan, where I met serious business people who wanted to invest in our resources because we have energy and workers. Japan has capital. Japan is the best partner we can possibly imagine.

While I was there, I found out that the Canadian government had shut down consular services without notifying the Japanese. That is absolutely ridiculous. Now it is ready to bend over backward to sign an agreement with Honduras. I would like the minister to explain his priorities, because I think Japan is more important than Honduras.

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right that Japan is very important, which is why we started trade negotiations directly with Japan on a bilateral basis. In fact, we are moving toward a fifth round of negotiations, which is something he may not have been aware of.

Government Orders

Yes, Japan is very important, but Honduras is also important because we have an opportunity in Honduras, a country that is moving out of a very troubled past, to share our best practices on issues such as democracy, human rights, the environment, and labour. These are areas where Canada has great strength. If we want to see one of the poorest countries in the world move out of poverty and have hope for the future, it is going to require engagement by countries like Canada.

Yes, we are going to do the deals with Japan and we are going to do deals with Korea and we are involved in the trans-Pacific partnership. However, I guarantee members that the NDP will be opposing those very same trade agreements when they come up for debate here.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for being here.

I have a quick question for him. I am trying to reconcile his earlier statements in his first intervention, when he said that the Honduras negotiations for this free trade agreement took four or five years. He can correct me if I am wrong, but now, all of a sudden, we can debate it in a day or two or whatever time has been allocated to us.

It took forever to negotiate an agreement with a country to which we export only \$38 million of goods a year. There seem to be all kinds of complexities involved in the deal if it took so long to negotiate. Meanwhile, we cannot even get the time to debate those complexities.

Can the minister clear up those contradicting statements?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the reason we have only \$38 million worth of exports to Honduras is that we do not have an open market there and we do not have a free trade agreement with Honduras.

In fact, I would remind the member that the European Union has had a free trade agreement in place for years. The United States has a trade agreement with Honduras. Mexico has a trade agreement in place with Honduras. Chile has an agreement in place with Honduras. Why is that? It is because they have understood that Honduras needs our help.

The countries I mentioned all have strong, robust human rights regimes and strong democracies. They understand that Honduras needs someone to walk beside them to share best practices, to move them into the 21st century, and to welcome them into the family of nations that respect human rights. That is the key role that Canada can play here.

We are absolutely committed to bringing this trade agreement into force. We have provided lots of opportunities since November for the opposition parties to view this agreement here in the House. It was tabled back in November. We make no apologies for that. We want to get this deal done.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the government is moving yet another time allocation motion.

We have made it quite clear in the House that we do not want our democracy to be undermined in this way. Members of all parties in

the House and Canadians watching our debates have the right to be informed about what is going on. This is unacceptable.

My colleague was talking about democracy in these countries, particularly in Honduras. He praised the democratic systems in those different countries, but he would be better off ensuring that democracy is as strong within our government here in Canada. That is not the case today.

• (1145)

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I would again remind the member of the NDP's appalling record on trade. NDP members have opposed virtually every trade agreement Canada has ever signed, so it should not be surprising to see the NDP members stand up in this House today and oppose the Honduras trade agreement, just as we fully expect them to oppose the EU trade agreement and an agreement with Japan or Korea. They are ideologically opposed to trade, and I would remind them of their terrible record.

When we were negotiating a trade agreement with Colombia, what did NDP members do? For two and a half years they stalled, obstructed, and filibustered. They had no intention of having a robust debate on the merits of the deal. They are simply stuck in an ideological rut and they cannot get out of it.

On this side of the House, we support trade and we support investment with our key trading partners abroad.

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his work on this particular file. Last week we had a meeting of parliamentarians—a reception, actually—based on our efforts to establish further ties with the Americas. It seemed that all parties want to see further ties with that part of the world.

We all know that free trade is the new stimulus. It does not cost the taxpayers. It allows Canadian businesses to compete. If we do not have these kinds of trade deals, places in my riding such as Nor-Mar Industries, UEE, and Gorman Brothers will not be able to compete on an even playing field.

Will the minister please comment and inform the House on Canada's strategy on the Americas?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, our strategy since 2006 has been to use trade and investment to drive economic growth at home. That means opening up new markets around the world for Canadian investors and Canadian exporters.

Let me talk again about Honduras, because that is the subject of this motion. It is really unfortunate that the NDP does not want to debate the merits of the bill. I will.

There is a Canadian company that is very active in Honduras. The name of the company is Gildan. It employs 20,000 Hondurans in manufacturing textiles and apparel.

Gildan has won numerous awards for corporate social responsibility and sustainability. This company has asked our government to please sign a trade agreement with Honduras because it will allow that company to increase trade between Honduras and Canada and provide it with opportunities to employ even more Hondurans.

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I had the opportunity to be on the ground in Honduras to visit one of Gildan's plants. It is clean and organized and has modern machinery. The company treats its employees well. That is the Canada brand going forward. That is why we want to open up new markets all around the world for Canadians exporters and investors.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, here is the truth. The Conservatives have brought in two motions today to do one thing: to disrupt the testimony of the Chief Electoral Officer. This is after the Conservatives gave their word to the parties in this House that we would end a filibuster in order to have that testimony on Thursday. That is the only reason this is happening. It is the Conservatives breaking their word.

Let us talk about Honduras a bit. *The Economist* calls Honduras a hybrid regime, rather than its previous designation as a flawed democracy. It is getting worse. Transparency International ranks Honduras as the most corrupt country in Central America, calling it a major drug smuggling centre. The U.S. State Department estimates that 79% of all cocaine shipments originating in South America land in Honduras.

In 2013 there have been, on average, 10 massacres per month. Massacres are defined as the murder of three or more people at a time for political reasons. Honduras is the murder capital of the world, with 81 murders per 100,000 people, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reports as well that it is the most dangerous place in the world for journalists.

If the Conservatives have the courage to look at the facts, why are they cutting off debate in this House after half a day of debate? If this deal is so good, if Honduras is such a great partner, if this is so important to the Canadian economy, then let us have at least three or four sessions so that Canadians can debate the facts. However, the Conservatives do not have—

• (1150)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order, please. The member will take his seat.

The hon. Minister of International Trade.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, the only part I agree with is that yes, Honduras is a challenging place for security. It is a challenging place for human rights. We acknowledge that, but these same arguments were made by the NDP when we negotiated a trade agreement with Colombia. It was the very same argument, and we have seen significant improvements in security in Colombia. We have seen significant increases in support for human rights in Colombia.

What is interesting about Honduras is that it is the largest source of development support from Canada. We are very interested in helping Honduras escape its troubled past. We are helping it on the security side. We are helping it on the justice side and the police enforcement side. We are helping it on the democratic capacity side. We want to make sure that as we open up new trade opportunities for Hondurans to improve their prosperity, move more people out of poverty, and give people hope, we also address those other areas that the member has just raised.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the face of it, what we are debating is whether the time allocated for debate on the bill to implement the trade treaty with Honduras

should be limited. We have the Conservative Party supporting cutting off debate and the opposition parties opposing it.

I just heard a Conservative member ask a question, because he wanted more information. What I heard was a Conservative member asking the minister for more information about trade with Honduras. I heard a minister who had plenty to say in his answer. He had interesting answers. Obviously he has a lot that he feels needs to be said. I do not quite understand how that is consistent with the Conservative Party's desire to cut off debate on this legislation.

I also heard the minister talk about how all these other countries had treaties with Honduras and that Canada was behind. Therefore, I have a question—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I apologize to my friend from Kingston and the Islands. The timing of this point of order is required.

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Did you just cut off his debate?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I just began speaking, if you don't mind.

The point of order the New Democrats are raising today is necessitated by the actions of the government, and it is incumbent upon us to raise it at this time. We are under a prescription right now in which time has been allocated to a bill before the government. The government has presented a time allocation motion. There is a duty to consult that exists within our Standing Orders whenever the government seeks to invoke such a clause.

The reason this Standing Order rule and practice in the House exists is that time allocation is a serious measure. It is the most serious measure a government can take on any piece of legislation, because it limits all members from all parties in their ability to debate and discuss any legislation before the House. That is what this is presenting.

The point of order we seek to raise is that from time to time objections have been raised, by Conservatives when they were in opposition and by New Democrats as well, as to the circumstances in which agreement was reached or the nature of the consultations undertaken by the government. As with closure, the Speaker has ruled that the Chair possesses no discretionary power or authority to refuse a motion of time allocation if all the procedural exigencies have been observed.

The Speaker has stated that the wording of the rule does not define the nature of the consultations that are to be held by the minister and representatives of the other parties. The Speaker has further ruled that the Chair has no authority to determine whether consultations took place nor what constitutes consultation among the representatives of the parties. All of that is correct, because it is not the Speaker's purview to witness, as the Speaker has observed, the consultations that go on among the parties in advance of a decision to be taken by the government, in this case, to limit the democratic rights of members, their own members included, to debate a piece of legislation.

Government Orders

This is based upon a Standing Order in the House, and I will cite the Standing Order for reference for all members to understand what we are talking about. Standing Order 78(3)(a) states:

A Minister of the Crown who from his or her place in the House, at a previous sitting, has stated that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of sections (1) or (2) of this Standing Order in respect of proceedings at the stage at which a public bill was then under consideration either in the House or in any committee, and has given notice of his or her intention so to do, may propose a motion during proceedings under Government Orders, for the purpose of allotting a specified number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at that stage; provided that the time allotted for any stage is not to be less than one sitting day and provided that for the purposes of this paragraph an allocation may be proposed in one motion to cover the proceedings at both the report and the third reading stages on a bill if that motion is consistent with the provisions of Standing Order 76.1(10). The motion shall not be subject to debate or amendment, and the Speaker shall put the question on the said motion forthwith. Any proceedings interrupted pursuant to this section of this Standing Order shall be deemed adjourned.

This is exactly what has just happened. The government brought in a time allocation motion under this Standing Order, which is its power to do. It is an extreme power, and it is meant to be used in rare cases. The government has used it more than 50 times, a record in Canadian history. However, also in the Standing Order is a duty and an obligation on the part of the government to consult with other parties in the House as to the—

Hon. Greg Rickford: Debate.

Hon. Ed Fast: Debate.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. members across the way to allow me to continue.

This is a point of order. I will thank the finance minister for his comments on the length of the point of order, but the point of order stands. The Conservatives can have their way with the power they have in a majority government, but they cannot simply run roughshod over the rules that have governed all governments in the history of Canada simply because they want to.

The point I raise is that the government earlier introduced time allocation on this trade agreement with Honduras. Previously, on the same morning, cynically, they also introduced time allocation on a previous motion before the House without any consultation with the opposition parties whatsoever, thereby contravening the Standing Orders that exist for all uses of this very extraordinary tool. The government seems, having used time allocation so often, to have gotten lazy with the procedure that is at hand.

• (1155)

The consultation can take any form. It can take the form of a conversation between me and the House leader of the government. It can take the form of an email or a note, anything. It does not take much, but it shows a modicum of respect, not for the opposition parties but for Parliament itself. To bring in time allocation, the government has to at least go through the motions of suggesting that perhaps the opposition party has an extraordinary number of speakers or seeks multiple days on any given legislation.

The government has to at least consult. It did not do that in this case. It did not even bother to show basic respect for Parliament, further driving home the argument and the fact that it holds this place in contempt. There is no basis of democratic values in the legislation the government introduced or how it did it—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Does the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons wish to respond?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yes, I do. You, as a former House leader, would certainly be familiar with the fact that we have regular consultations with the other parties. With the House leaders we have weekly House leaders meetings.

I do not want to get into the particulars of what happened on these particular bills. We do not do that. Of course, at those meetings, the government puts forward its proposed legislative agenda. We suggest to the other parties how many days we would like to see it debated. We look for input. We look for a response.

Again, I do not want to discuss details. I am not going to say how much difficulty I have had ever getting from one particular party an answer on its position or an agreement. Without betraying any confidences, I can say that I do not think I can ever remember an agreement with the NDP on timing on any particular bill coming out of those meetings.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the precedents on this are clear. It is not up to the Speaker to inquire into and judge the adequacy or the extent of the consultation. You know that the consultation occurs. I can say to you with good assurance that we have circulated our proposed legislative agenda and the debates we would like to have on these matters.

I still look forward always to responses, but consultation and communication is a two-way street. It requires that sometimes there are answers from the other side. I can assure the House that we have always consulted and will continue to consult on the legislative calendar and will seek whatever agreement we can from other parties on our agenda.

I do not want to get into the specifics of those meetings again. It is not appropriate. However, I can tell the House that such consultation does occur, and we do put what we would like to see as debates to the other parties.

• (1200)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the government House leader rightly points out that there is a Tuesday afternoon House leaders meeting, which I attend with him. The government puts forward its government calendar. We recognize the calendar. We often offer up suggestions.

What has happened in this case, as in too many cases, is that the government absolutely did not ask for input on the number of speakers we required. They did not seek any consultative advice whatsoever. There was none on this. I can assure the member of that.

The government House leader can pretend what he would like, but the facts remain the facts. This is the only tool the government has in its toolbox anymore. If it is just a hammer that it has, every problem looks like a nail.

It is Parliament that suffers, not just the Conservatives' reputation.

Government Orders

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I come to these meetings in good faith every week. I do my best to seek a response. It is up to the opposition, if it wishes these meetings to be made more productive, to participate and make them more productive.

The Deputy Speaker: With regard to the point of order, I am not ruling against it, but I would like to quote from O'Brien and Bosc, page 667, under "Notice". This is what is required when one of these notices is brought forward:

The notice in question is to state that agreement could not be reached under the other provisions of the rule and that the government therefore intends to propose a motion...

The hon. government House leader, when he rose in the House yesterday, preceded his presentation of the motion with the following words:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that agreements could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2)...

That is all that is required by the Standing Orders. The nature of the consultation, the quality of the consultation, and the quantity of the consultation is not something that the Chair will involve himself in. That has been the tradition of this House for many years. What the Chair would have to do, in effect, is conduct an extensive investigative inquiry into the nature of the consultation. That is not our role, nor do the rules require it. Therefore, I am rejecting the request for the point of order.

The member for Kingston and the Islands is rising. I am anticipating the point he is raising, but we simply do not have time to get a response to his question, if that is the point he is raising.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to finish maybe one or two sentences of what I was saying. Because I was interrupted by a point of order, I thought that maybe after the point of order was resolved there would be—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry, but we are out of time for the question and answer period.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1245)

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

(Division No. 79)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Falk	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukowski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Reid	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 145	

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NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brosseau
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Freeman
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravnigat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriote — 117	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

SECOND READING

The House resumed from January 29 consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the onset, I would like to inform you that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Red Deer.

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to speak about what our government is doing to support prosperity for all Canadians and how the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would be part of the bigger picture.

The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would be another step in fulfilling our Conservative government's ambitious pro-trade plan. International trade is critical to the Canadian economy. We need to ensure open borders for our exporters. One in five Canadian jobs is related to exports. Freer, more open trade would ensure that we could support domestic economic growth and new jobs. Our Conservative government has always been a supporter of free and open trade. For this reason, our government made it a priority to diversify our international trade negotiations agenda and place increased focus on concluding regional and bilateral trade agreements, such as the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement we are discussing today. These agreements would be complementary and, in fact, would strengthen the important work of the WTO.

It may surprise many Canadians to learn that, in 2006, Canada only had free trade agreements with five countries. Our government recognized the situation was not good for Canadian companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, which depend more and more on international markets for their success. Lack of competitive access to global markets was putting Canadian exporters, investors, and service providers at a competitive disadvantage. This was especially apparent when key competitors from the U.S. and the EU were already enjoying preferential market access.

It was clear that the Government of Canada needed to act. That is why we introduced the global commerce strategy in 2007. The global commerce strategy was focused upon expanding our global trade network, strengthening Canada's competitiveness in established markets, while also expanding into fast-moving, emerging economies. The strategy supported Canadian company participation in international markets; in particular, helping them to seize opportunities as part of global value chains. It has also identified markets in which Canada should focus its trade negotiating capacity.

Our Conservative government has concluded new free trade agreements with nine countries, which is something to celebrate, beginning with the European Free Trade Association member states of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland, followed by Colombia, Jordan, Peru, Panama, and of course, most recently, Honduras, which we are debating today.

Of course, there is the landmark Canada-European Union comprehensive economic trade agreement, which once ratified, would mean that Canada would have free trade agreements with 42 nations.

Government Orders

The CETA with the EU took some time to negotiate. The Europeans, having brought together 27 countries—now 28 with the addition of Croatia less than a year ago—have extensive experience in negotiating agreements, as they brought this coalition of 28 countries together. Therefore, for Canada, it is a tremendous credit to our Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and our own minister, the hon. member for Abbotsford, that we have developed tremendous capacity and experience in advancing trade agreements.

This is a major achievement, but we will not rest on our laurels. We recognize the success of the 2007 global commerce strategy, and in the 2012 economic action plan, we confirmed our intention to build upon success.

It is important to us that we respond to the evolving needs of Canadian companies. We do not deliver strategies in a vacuum. We get out there and talk to business. That is one of the reasons why our low tax regime is so important to Canadian businesses.

● (1250)

The hon. Minister of Finance is reported by some to be the best finance minister in the world. We give him credit for helping to keep taxes low in Canada, which creates an environment for business to prosper and for Canadians to do well. I am sure members will remember that, because of the more than 160 tax cuts we have brought in since forming government, the average Canadian family is now saving \$3,400 every year. That is a tremendous accomplishment.

Bloomberg business magazine recently said that Canada is the second best country in the world with which to do business. That is something to brag about.

The work is not done. There is a lot more to do. It is a competitive world. These agreements are about creating opportunities for our small and medium-size businesses, as well as large enterprises, to engage with the world and for countries like Honduras to engage with Canada to expand and strengthen the family of nations through trade.

We have conducted consultations right across Canada. We have engaged with around 400 business and industry stakeholders. They were not just large corporations but also small and medium-size businesses, which are the lifeblood of the Canadian economy. That is why we are proud of the global markets action plan we launched in November 2013. It is not some bureaucratic exercise. It is a concrete plan for Canadian businesses, developed with Canadian businesses.

The global markets action plan focuses on our international economic engagement by identifying priority sectors and markets. It also underscores the importance of economic diplomacy. It aims to help Canadian small and medium-size companies expand their global reach.

Through this government's initiatives, we want to support Canadian companies, whether they export goods or services or want to invest to be competitive in new markets.

Speaking of new markets, our government has long recognized the growing importance of the Americas. The Prime Minister confirmed this when he made the region a foreign policy priority in

2007. Increased trade and commercial engagement are part of the Prime Minister's vision for a more prosperous, secure, and democratic hemisphere. It makes economic sense to Canadian businesses too. Total trade between countries in the Americas and Canada increased 32% from 2007 to 2012, not to mention that Canadian direct investment was up 58.6% over the same period. That is why we want to deepen trade relations with countries in the region, such as Honduras. Our government realized that we needed to get results faster for Canadian companies, so we moved to bilateral negotiations with our most ambitious partner, which is Honduras.

In August 2011, the Prime Minister was able to announce the successful conclusion of our free trade talks. The Prime Minister recognized the importance of this agreement. He confirmed that the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement was a key part of our government's agenda to open new markets for Canadian business, to create new opportunities for our workers, and to contribute to Canada's future prosperity.

This free trade agreement would provide numerous benefits to Canadian companies that are active or interested in Honduras. Not only would it eliminate the vast majority of Honduran tariffs, but it would help raise the profile of Canadian businesses in the country, and further deepen and strengthen Canada's commercial and economic relationship with Honduras.

The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would also make us competitive with players from the U.S. and the EU, which already enjoy free trade with Honduras, not to mention giving Canadian companies a secure and predictable framework for business.

In responding to a question earlier, the minister commented on one Canadian company with 20,000 employees that is employing Hondurans and helping to raise the standard of living for them.

In my remarks, I have highlighted how this Conservative government is proactively addressing the needs of Canadian business, both globally and in the dynamic region of the Americas. It is also clear that the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would create new opportunities for Canadian companies in the Honduran market. Moving this agreement forward would respond to the needs of Canadian companies. It would be yet another step in support of our growth and prosperity agenda.

For these reasons, I hope all hon. colleagues will support the ratification of this free trade agreement with Honduras.

● (1255)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoulu, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to the great shame of Canadians, the government is busy promoting a free trade agreement by hiding behind so-called job creation and economic activity. In the meantime, there is no mention of the murders that occur every day all across that very small country, or the repression or human rights offences there.

Government Orders

Let us not forget that since the 2009 coup d'état, that country has never gotten out from under its democratic deficit. It is absolutely incredible that in addition to completely muzzling us, the government is denying us our right to speak, claiming that it wants to accelerate the process for adopting this type of agreement.

How can my colleague defend this type of behaviour?

[*English*]

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, I think the member, typical of the NDP, is opposed to trade agreements in general.

What the member fails to appreciate is the fact that part of our north-south agreement is to help develop governance capacity in the nations with which we are engaging. We are investing through our aid programs and helping to build justice, train them in justice, train police forces, and help build governance capacity. These are all important measures in helping to stabilize any country.

By providing employment and creating employment opportunities for Canadian businesses to interact, we want to help establish best practices to help them understand how proper labour arrangements work and what stable employment can provide for people in terms of economic opportunity to create a stable society. That is what free trade arrangements are about. If we waited for countries to be perfect, well, a lot of countries would miss an opportunity to get a hand up to a better level of life.

Canada has had a very successful democracy. There are people who think we do not have it quite right yet. It is a work in progress, but we are trying to help those who are further behind to come up to a better level.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech that was just given by a government member.

How is it that, after signing a number of free trade agreements under this government, Canada has gone from having a \$26 billion trade surplus to having a \$62 billion trade deficit?

How can the government continue to sit back and do nothing as businesses close or outsource jobs? Why is the government doing nothing while foreign state-owned enterprises are buying up our natural resources?

Why is the government still promoting these agreements?

[*English*]

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that exports create about 35% of the economic opportunity and employment in Canada. We see this as an opportunity, which our friends opposite fail to appreciate, unfortunately. Creating opportunities for our Canadian companies to engage in other parts of the world, in fact, expands trade.

NDP members were opposed to the North American Free Trade Agreement. On that side of the House, they are opposed to every free trade agreement we bring in. They said it would be a disaster and terrible for Canada. However, in fact, NAFTA brought great opportunity to Canada, and so has every other trade opportunity.

I just mentioned in my speech that our trade with the north-south axis has increased 32% in the last few years. That creates

opportunities, and opportunities are what we need in a very competitive world.

That is why on our side of the House we support engaging with other nations. It is one of our best opportunities to help them with governance capacity, to help them with aid, and to help them develop economic opportunities in their own nations. We want to share Canada's expertise with the world and create opportunities for our own businesses at the same time.

● (1300)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today about the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement.

I have been very fortunate, in having been part of ParlAmericas, to go to Central America and meet with different leaders from various countries and to talk to them about the issues they have. This issue on trade is certainly extremely important. As a result of this experience, I am confident that members will also see the benefits of this partnership, for Canadian exporters, service providers, and investors alike.

Our Conservative government is focused on the priorities of Canadians, that is, creating new jobs and new opportunities. We continue to work hard to ensure the competitiveness of Canadian businesses and exporters in the global marketplace.

This free trade agreement with Honduras is about more than just trade and investment. Our Conservative government is committed to taking action on environmental issues that matter most to Canadians. We have been consistent in demonstrating that trade liberalization and environmental protection go hand in hand. For that reason, as part of this comprehensive free trade agreement, Canada and Honduras are committed to striving for good environmental governance, while at the same time opening our borders to the benefits of increased economic activity.

Canada and Honduras recognize the need to implement this FTA in a manner that is consistent with environmental protection and promoting sustainable development. That is why in concluding this free trade agreement, Canada and Honduras also signed a parallel agreement on environmental co-operation. The parallel agreement commits both countries to encouraging high levels of domestic environmental protection to foster good environmental governance and promote transparency and public participation.

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This follows the approach we have taken in this regard with previous free trade agreements, such as those with Peru, Colombia, Jordan, and Panama, all building on the approach that Canada, the United States, and Mexico took together in negotiating environmental provisions alongside the North American free trade agreement.

With the growth of economic, environmental, and social links between our two countries that will follow from this free trade agreement, Canada and Honduras recognize the desirability of pursuing policies that promote sustainable development and sound environmental management.

This agreement on environmental co-operation, like others that Canada has signed, would commit Canada and Honduras to effectively enforcing our environmental laws and ensuring we do not relax or weaken those laws to encourage trade or investment. This agreement would commit both countries to pursuing high levels of environmental protection and continuing to develop and improve their environmental laws and policies.

In recognition of the substantial benefits of international trade and investment, and with a view to strengthening our mutual economic and environmental objectives, this agreement includes a commitment to encouraging voluntary best practices of corporate social responsibility. It also includes a key commitment that both countries maintain appropriate environmental assessment procedures. These are also commitments to promoting public participation and transparency to promote public awareness of environmental laws and policies.

Similarly, the agreement includes mechanisms that would allow residents of Canada and Honduras to ask questions of either party about the obligations under the agreement.

The agreement would also commit Canada and Honduras to ensuring that domestic proceedings are available to provide sanctions or remedies for violations of our respective environmental laws.

In addition, the agreement would also put in place a framework for Canada and Honduras to work co-operatively in support of the environmental objectives and obligations of this agreement. To this end, Canada and Honduras will work together to develop a co-operative work program to address mutual environmental priorities and enhance overall environmental management capacities.

Points of co-operation will be determined once the agreement is in force, and could include working together on such priorities as environmental enforcement, climate change, migratory species, conservation of biodiversity, and protective areas management. In order to oversee implementation, a committee on the environment would be established, which would be comprised of government officials from both Canada and Honduras.

• (1305)

Importantly, we have set out a bilateral consultation mechanism in the agreement to address any differences that may come about through the implementation of this agreement. Our dispute resolution approach focuses on facilitating dialogue and building environmental management capacity rather than increasing the administrative burden.

To complement the commitments in the environmental co-operation agreement itself, the Canada-Honduras FTA has a principle-based environment chapter that sets out the relationship between the FTA and the agreement on environmental co-operation. The FTA also includes other important environment-related provisions in relation to the importance of environmental protection and conservation and the promotion of sustainable development. Among these, the text of the free trade agreement ensures that certain multilateral environmental agreements with trade-related provisions would prevail over the FTA in the event of an inconsistency.

With the Canada-Honduras agreement on environmental co-operation and the related text in the FTA, Canada has again taken steps to ensure that increased trade does not come at the expense of the environment. Together with Honduras, we have set out an agreement that commits us both to striving for good environmental governance in order to protect the environment, while realizing the benefits of increased economic activity flowing from liberalized trade.

Our Conservative government is committed to increasing opportunities for mutually beneficial commerce and investment, including with our partners in the Americas, in order to generate inclusive and sustainable economic growth and prosperity. This new partnership with Honduras is a great example. The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement, and its parallel environment agreement, will contribute to new opportunities for Canadian businesses, exporters, and investors, while working to ensure positive environmental outcomes for both countries.

For these reasons, I urge all members to support the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the speech just given by a government member.

Although I do not want to call into question his sincerity when it comes to agreements and respecting the environment, I would like to express my doubt—with a capital “D”—about the government’s sincerity and intentions when it comes to protecting the environment.

However, that is not what my question is about. I would like the government member to tell me truthfully what Honduras is going to buy. What products is Canada going to sell to this country? What Canadian products is Honduras interested in buying?

Trade involves purchases and so forth. What is Honduras going to buy from Canada to help us regain our trade balance? Right now we have a significant deficit.

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[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member very much for the question. It gives me an opportunity to go through a list for each and every province, and I will certainly start with Quebec. Honduran tariffs in sectors of export interest, first of all, chemical production, would see the elimination of tariffs that range up to 15%. The industrial machinery sector includes articles of iron and steel. There is pork. There is maple syrup. These are some of the areas that should be important to the member and the people she represents.

In Ontario, there is industrial machinery, plastics, textiles, pork, as well as live animals. To go to my own province, the exports we have there are beef, furniture, textiles, and construction equipment.

I have had the opportunity to be in Central America, as I mentioned earlier in my speech, as part of my parliamentary duties with ParlAmericas. I have had chances to speak to members of the Honduran government. They look to Canada as a leader that can help to bring them out of the difficulties and issues they have. We need that.

• (1310)

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's claims are nothing more than wishful thinking.

Although I have very little free time, I make time each night before going to bed to read for a little while. I am just finishing up an essay written by French-American economist Esther Duflo, who is now an advisor to President Obama.

In the part of the essay I am reading right now, she clearly establishes that a country needs strong institutions in order to prosper in an environment free of corruption and political and social dysfunction. However, such is not the case in Honduras.

That being said, can my government colleague provide specific examples to back his claim that supporting a stronger economy in Honduras will automatically and magically result in democracy for that country?

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, what principles can we put in place? What principles are there? The suggestion was that there has to be a strong infrastructure together before we even try. That is so unfair.

If an individual were to go to Central America and look at some of the issues that countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras deal with, they would see the things they have managed to do and what they are asking of Canada. We have been able to deliver on the justice issue and as far as democratic capacity. These are the things that we bring, because of our nature, because we are Canadians, and because we care about helping those throughout the world. That is the thing we should be looking at.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in the debate. I only wish that the government had not come forward with a time allocation motion because I know a lot of my colleagues would like the opportunity to engage in this debate. Contrary to what the members opposite love to talk about, New Democrats are not

opposed to trade, not in the least, but we want to make sure that the trade Canada participates in is trade that is not only good for Canada and Canadians but is also good for the countries and the people we trade with, and that it is done under the principles we consider important to us as Canadians.

We have had concerns about some of the deals that the government has pulled together. This agreement, for example, came as a result of the fact that the Conservatives were unsuccessful in putting together a multilateral deal in Central America, dealing with a number of countries on the basis of some of those principles. As a result, we are now dealing with a bilateral trade deal that New Democrats have some concerns with, as we did with the deal with Colombia.

Before I wade in any further, let me indicate that I will be splitting my time with the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, as he has some important messages to share about this deal that are relevant to his constituents and Canadians whom he represents.

Let me reiterate what my colleague, the NDP trade critic, has indicated before. New Democrats look at every and any trade deal on whether it meets three criteria. Number one, does the proposed partner share Canadian values that include respect for democracy, human rights, and does it have adequate environmental and labour standards? Number two, does the proposed deal offer significant or strategic value to Canada, Canadians, and our economy? Number three, are the actual terms of the agreement in themselves satisfactory? We have looked at the deal. We should understand that this deal, like everything else the government does, has been negotiated in complete secrecy, behind closed doors, without any consultation or discussion with Canadians about what they were doing, what the impact was, and so on.

I have heard Conservative members somewhat piously, frankly, talk about what great things they are doing for the poor people of Honduras. What I would rather see the government do is use its influence on the government of Honduras to start recognizing true principles of democracy and honouring and respecting human rights and the right of law. That is not what the government has done and that is certainly a problem that New Democrats see with the Government of Honduras.

It is not about whether we are able to help the country and the people of that country. If our development agencies, such as Democracy Watch, and other NGOs are able to work with likeminded organizations and communities within Honduras, that is a good thing. Unfortunately, those people, whether they be labour activists, environmentalists or journalists, are under threat as a result of the activities of Honduras and officials who represent either the government or the police. Therefore, the question of human rights abuses is a very serious one that the government should be taking into consideration before it tries to engage in any type of activity.

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•(1315)

We have heard from a number of international organizations that as a result of the military coup in 2009, there is a government in place that does not respect the principles of democracy and human rights. Honduras has the highest murder rate in the world. It is considered one of the most dangerous countries for journalists. It is a major drug-smuggling centre, and it is considered to be one of the most corrupt countries in Central America.

What would this deal do about these issues? What would this deal do to try to make sure that the people are protected from what their government is doing?

Frankly, by participating with the government and with the major corporations in Honduras, we would be saying that what they are doing is okay. We would be saying that what they do to their people is okay. What they do to their environment is okay. We just want do business with them.

Let us not forget that Honduras is currently Canada's 104th export market. It is not high on the list in terms of value to Canadian exporters. In 2012, we exported \$38 million and imported \$218 million of merchandise. That is a similar kind of trade balance that we recognize that the government has been responsible for in each and every sector that we see in our economy.

The concern we have, again, is that if we are going to participate as a country in the world, whether it be in trade issues or in human rights and democracy, whatever it is that we do, the way we walk on this earth, we want to do it based on those principles of respect, understanding the role of human rights and the law, protecting the environment, and the rights of labour so that people can come together collectively and represent themselves. That is what we believe. We want it so that those practices are allowed to continue. We should be a model for countries around the world. We should be participating with countries that reflect those same principles so that they can be enforced.

Countries like Honduras that do not follow those practices and do not seem to have the same kinds of principles will look at Canada and say that they would like to trade with us and participate with us in an economic fashion, so what is it going to take? What are they going to have to do to make that happen? It would be very clear that there has to be a recognition and a respect for democratic rights, human rights, the environment, and the law.

That is what Canada needs to do. That is why we have been opposed, because we do not feel that the Government of Honduras is an example of a country that we should be participating with.

Do we want to help the people of Honduras? Absolutely. Do we want to try to make sure that their government respects their rights, their environment, and the rule of law? Absolutely. However, participating in a trade deal without demanding that certain practices change is not the answer. All that would do is make sure that the behaviours that we find reprehensible will continue.

We can do better in this country. There are other nations that we need to be participating with. For example, Brazil, Japan, and South Africa are countries that we should be negotiating deals with. It is time that the government started to recognize countries that would

make true partners with our nation and people, and move forward in that direction.

•(1320)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while listening to the hon. member's speech, I heard him make a suggestion that these were pious pronouncements by members opposite, and of course I was the one who was just speaking prior to that. I do take some offence to his thoughts that we would be thinking about this in a callous way.

I would like to talk a bit about the NDP trade critic being quoted in *Huffington Post* as saying that Honduras, along with Colombia, Peru, Chile, Costa Rica, and Panama are "...not key economies with any kind of strategic value for Canada". There was no discussion about human rights; just "no strategic value for Canada".

The NDP member for British Columbia Southern Interior has written that "trade agreements threaten the very existence of our nation". There was no discussion about human rights as far as Canada is concerned.

Then he mentioned that trade agreements are job destroying.

We look at those situations and then they stand and say that they are the defenders of human rights and as long as we have the kind of country that has our unions with labour and everything else, that is what is important and then we can talk about it.

I just wonder how Canadian businesses can be protected from the anti-trade rhetoric.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying that I am glad the member was offended, although I did not say anything that he would necessarily need to be offended by. However, I am glad he responded to what I was saying because that means he is listening, and that is good and I appreciate that.

My point was that the area where we disagree is that the Conservatives think they can deal with anybody as long as it is an economic agreement; that as long as they are doing business, it does not matter what the ethics or practices are of that company or that nation; and that it does not matter what the rules of law are, and so on. It does not seem to matter, the way the people are treated, and the way the environment is not protected, and the way that journalists are threatened and labour activists are thrown in jail. Those things do not matter. If we are going to do a deal, we are going to do a deal.

My point, and the point of our trade critic who is doing such a great job on this file, is that we have some responsibility and that people do want to trade with Canada and Canada wants to trade with other people, but we do not trade at all costs and we ensure that we are carrying ourselves and conducting ourselves in ways that would make Canadians proud. That has to be the bottom line.

•(1325)

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as always I appreciate the passion that the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour brings to this place.

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At the outset of his remarks, he described his party as one that is in favour of free trade. There are a couple of sayings that come to mind immediately. One is that they can “talk the talk, but not walk the walk”; and also, perhaps not in the context of this particular agreement, but in general, that “the perfect is often the enemy of the good”.

Given the member's statement that his party is one that supports free trade, other than the free trade agreement with Jordan, could he provide a list of the free trade agreements that his party has voted in support of?

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that question from the Liberal Party. It gives me an opportunity to talk about the fact that the Liberal Party supports the trade deal with Honduras, that the Liberal Party does not identify with the kind of precision I would suggest that we do in this caucus, regarding the pros and cons of any particular trade deal.

The members of the government of this day feel that any trade deal is a good deal. When the Conservatives bring forward good deals that benefit our country, trade deals that recognize the way we are going to conduct business in the world and deal with the terrible trade imbalance we have in this country, then we will begin to look favourably on those trade deals.

The Liberal Party has not done that. It has not brought trade deals that have benefited Canada in that way, nor has the Conservative Party. As soon as it does, then we will vote for those deals.

However, let me say that we will see better trade deals after 2015 when the New Democratic Party forms the government.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for sharing his time with me this morning, because many of us who wanted to speak on this trade deal are going to be denied that opportunity as a result of the government's time allocation motion. I really appreciate the member's sharing his time.

I am, of course, speaking to oppose this bill at second reading. I want to address something that keeps coming up again. I know that the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour addressed it as well. The NDP has said there are three criteria for assessing trade agreements. When those criteria are met, we will support these agreements.

First, we should ask ourselves if the proposed trading partner is one who respects democracy, human rights, adequate environmental and labour standards, and Canadian values generally. Second, is the proposed partner's economy of significant or strategic value to Canada? Third, are the terms of the proposed agreement satisfactory?

I believe this agreement fails all three of these tests. That is the reason I plan to vote against it.

I want to focus on the first criterion and the appalling human rights record of Honduras. International human rights organizations have documented serious human rights abuses, killings, arbitrary detentions of thousands of people, severe restrictions on public demonstrations and protests and freedom of expression, and interference in the independence of the judiciary. These are all well-established facts about the Honduran human rights record.

Honduras, as many have mentioned, has the highest murder rate in the world and is considered the most dangerous country in the world for journalists. Transparency International ranks it as the most corrupt country in Central America. We all know it is a major drug smuggling centre, and it has the worst income inequality in the region.

Why has Canada chosen to negotiate a trade deal with Honduras, a country with a seriously flawed human rights record and a history of repressive, undemocratic politics?

The democratically elected government of left-leaning president Manuel Zelaya was overthrown by a military coup in 2009. The Honduran army carried out this coup under the pretext of a constitutional crisis that was actually a dispute about the president's progressive social and economic policies. This move was widely condemned around the world, including by all other Latin American nations, the European Union, the United States, and the UN General Assembly.

Canada has refused to consider any sanctions against the regime that succeeded president Zelaya, and has refused to condemn the systematic abuses of human rights that occurred in its aftermath. Instead, we have chosen to pursue a closer economic relationship with Honduras without conditions. It is interesting to note that the same time we are pursuing free trade with Honduras, we broke off free trade talks with El Salvador when it elected a progressive government. I think there is an agenda here that seems quite clear: we will do deals, but not with people who are too progressive.

In January 2010, the current leader, Mr. Sosa, assumed the presidency through what almost all have called undemocratic and illegitimate elections. Most foreign governments and election monitoring agencies refused to even send observers to these elections, and almost all countries, I guess apart from Canada, have rejected the results of these elections.

The leading Honduran human rights group has documented the killings of at least 16 political activists and candidates from the main opposition party since June 2012 and attacks on 15 more. On August 25, 2013, three leaders of the indigenous Tolupan of Honduras were shot and killed. There are extensively documented cases of police corruption and documentation of 149 ex-judicial killings of civilians by the police reported between January 2011 and November 2012 alone.

Earlier the Minister of International Trade suggested that Honduras is coming out of a difficult period, but the facts paint a very different picture.

Let us look at what international human rights organizations have to say about the situation in Honduras now. Let me quote from Amnesty International's written statement to the 25th session of the UN Human Rights Council just a few days ago. The statement was called “Honduras: Deteriorating human rights situation needs urgent measures.” It says:

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Amnesty International is increasingly concerned about the human rights situation in Honduras, in particular about human rights violations against human rights defenders, women and girls, Indigenous, Afro-descendant and campesino (peasant) communities, and LGBTI people. These violations take place in a context where impunity for human rights violations and abuses is endemic and where organized and common crime is high. In 2011, according to UN figures, the homicide rate in Honduras was the highest in the world.

It is a pretty damning indictment of the current human rights situation and not an indication that Honduras is coming out of some dark period.

Human Rights Watch recently issued a similar report. For the sake of time today, I will not read through that report but it says essentially the same things as the Amnesty report.

• (1330)

I want to draw attention today to two groups that continue to be subject to extreme levels of violence in Honduras, journalists and transgendered Hondurans. According to Honduras' own National Human Rights Commission, 36 journalists were killed between 2003 and mid-2013. That is about one journalist every four months, and many others have suffered threats, attacks, and kidnappings, including the kidnapping and murder of the most prominent TV news anchor in June 2013.

The authorities have consistently failed to investigate all of these crimes. No charges have been laid in the murder of the TV news anchor. Attacks on journalists and opposition candidates are of course attacks on democracy and should be a serious concern when they take place in a country with whom Canada is contemplating signing an international agreement of any kind.

There has been less publicity about attacks on the other group I want to draw attention to, but who have been subject to even higher levels of violence in Honduras. This is the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered community, but in particular the transgendered community. Again, why would Canada seek an agreement with Honduras in view of its appalling record of violence against the LGBTQ community, especially when the Minister of Foreign Affairs has made strong statements in defence of gay rights in other forums?

In May 2009, Human Rights Watch published a report on human rights abuses against transgendered people in Honduras called "Not Worth a Penny". This report documents the murder of 17 transgendered people in public places, in broad daylight, in Honduras in the five years leading up to its report. Not one of these killings led to a prosecution or a conviction.

Lest we be misled by the Minister of International Trade's assertion that things are getting better, let me provide some updates on how things are actually getting worse for transgendered Hondurans.

Since the release of the 2009 human rights report, 34 more members of the LGBTQ community have been murdered in Honduras. The one bright spot is that there has been one prosecution and one conviction: 39 more attacks, one prosecution and one conviction.

On January 31, 2011, Human Rights Watch sent a letter appealing to President Porfirio Lobo Sosa to investigate the murders of six

transgendered women in a 60-day period. None of those deaths has been investigated and, obviously, there have been no arrests.

Transrespect, the group that intends to document violence against the transgendered community around the world for the annual Trans Day of Remembrance, has documented eight more trans murders in Honduras in 2012, and 12 more in 2013. This gives Honduras the distinction of having the highest per capita transgender murder rate in the world. Not only is it the highest rate in the world, but it is also twice the rate of the country with the second highest rate, and three times that of the country with the third highest rate.

This brings the total number of trans murders up to 60 in six years. This includes the January 9, 2009 assassination of Cynthia Nicole Moreno, a widely known Honduran transgender rights leader who worked as a spokesperson for Colectivo Violeta, the transgender rights organization. She was often seen on the streets helping to provide information about HIV and AIDS and basic human rights to transgendered sex workers, and she often represented the transgender community in the media. There has been no prosecution of anyone for her death.

The North American Congress on Latin America, another observer of the sad events in Honduras, also documented the murder of Walter Trochez, a young health promoter for the Association for a Better Life for Persons Infected and Affected by HIV/AIDS in Honduras. Again, he was shot in broad daylight by two men on a motorcycle. Although human rights groups have demanded an investigation, no one has been prosecuted for his killing to this date.

What is most disturbing is that pattern of transgender murders indicates that security forces have often been involved, and that even where they have not been directly involved, they have consistently failed to investigate and follow-up with prosecutions of those responsible.

I have chosen to focus on that first criterion of the three that the NDP says are those ones by which we must evaluate countries before entering into trade deals. Honduras is by any measure an undemocratic country, a serious human rights violator.

Canadians expect our federal government to set a good example on the world stage by seeking out partners that respect fundamental human rights and share our sense that all citizens are entitled at the very least to the right to life and not being subject to attack by their own security forces.

This deal fails to defend fundamental Canadian values on the world stage and fails to aid Hondurans who are seeking to protect their fundamental human rights.

• (1335)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague with great concern because I realized how far Canada has fallen internationally. Canada was seen as a champion of democratic development and human rights around the world, but we are now in a position where the Conservatives and Liberals laugh at the issue of human rights abuse.

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Looking back on our tradition, we had Brian Mulroney stand up against apartheid. Canada could have been there to make a buck but that government said no, that making a buck off the backs of such a corrupt system was not right. We saw previous Liberals regimes speak up against the murders and killings that were going on in El Salvador.

However, today the present Conservative government and the Liberal opposition are of the position and mindset that anyone who raises concerns about the killing of people speaking up for their democratic rights is somehow speaking pie-in-the-sky silliness, and that to make buck off such a corrupt and illegitimate regime is how business is done.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague how he thinks that places Canada, which once had such a stellar reputation for speaking up for on basic human rights, but now has this kind of cynical abuse from the Conservatives and Liberals.

• (1340)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for that question because it brings us to the heart of the matter. Canadians believe that we should still be pursuing those traditional policies, seeking to support the best in the world and not aiding the worst in the world.

As I pointed out in my speech, we have a very interesting case in Central America. We were pursuing a free trade agreement with El Salvador when it elected a progressive government committed to improving public health and income distribution in the country. However, we broke off those talks and instead have continued to seek a closer relationship with Honduras, which, as I said many times, has the worst record in Central America and one of the worst human rights records in the entire world.

I think Canadians would be ashamed to think that this is the role we are now playing on the international stage.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my hon. colleague's speech focusing on some very difficult human rights abuses in Honduras.

However, I find the current Conservative government very hypocritical, in that it will rush to defend human rights in certain cases and at the same time negotiate free trade agreements with countries with the worst human rights records.

The government knows how serious that situation has been since 2009, when the Government of Honduras suspended the right to free speech and right to liberty. These are fundamental rights that we enjoy here in Canada. However, the supposition in the catechism of the Conservative Party is that if one has a free trade with a bad regime, somehow the regime will become good. The thing is, there is no evidence for that. This is taken on faith by the Conservative Party. In fact, it could have the effect of propping up an undemocratic and, frankly, totalitarian regime.

I wonder what my hon. colleague has to say on that point of faith of the Conservatives.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Pontiac for his question because, again, it brings us back to the heart of the matter.

The Conservatives on the other side like to say that the NDP always oppose trade agreements. We know that is not true. However, we are demanding that there be standards for those trade agreements and that those standards reflect the values of all Canadians.

It is important to remember that this is not an attack on the people of Honduras; this is an attack on a government that was not democratically elected but placed in power by the military.

Instead of working with people who are trying to build democracy in Honduras, signing this trade agreement would make us partners with a corrupt, human rights violating government. I do not think that is what Canadians expect of our country on the international stage.

Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of the bill. I will be splitting my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights.

This afternoon it is my great pleasure to speak about Canada's development program in Honduras. I wish to demonstrate how our Conservative government's development program provides a positive platform for the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement. I welcome the opportunity to present to members the development context in Honduras and our development program there, and to highlight the many results achieved to date.

We are confident that our government's development program will support and promote economic opportunities in Honduras in a way that will allow trade between both countries to grow steadily over time.

Canada has a long-standing development relationship with Honduras, and it has provided official development assistance to the country since 1969, contributing over \$450 million to date.

Through the years Canada has become a key donor in that country, a well-respected and influential partner for the Government of Honduras and for other donors. Honduras is one of the 20 countries of focus for Canada's development assistance. It is Canada's largest bilateral program in Central America and the second-largest in the hemisphere. In 2011-2012, Canada provided over \$39 million to the country through all development channels. This makes Canada the third-largest bilateral donor in Honduras and the sixth-largest overall donor in the country.

If I may, I would like to take a few minutes to talk about Honduras and what our Conservative government is doing to help address that country's development needs.

Honduras, as we know through discussion today, is a lower-middle-income country with a small, open economy that relies heavily on trade and remittances. The country is highly vulnerable to hurricanes and floods. Most of the population rely on agriculture for their livelihood, a sector that accounted for 14.8% of Honduras' GDP in 2012.

Government Orders

Sixty per cent of the population is living in poverty, 18% of whom are considered to be living in extreme poverty. What is particularly alarming is that the situation has shown little improvement since 2009 as the country has felt the effects of the global economic downturn. This is particularly true for rural areas of Honduras, where the most vulnerable and marginalized segments of the population live.

Although the Honduran government has made efforts to reduce poverty, economic and social progress has been slow. A big concern is the state of youth, because 52.4% of the population of 7.8 million are under 19 years old. Honduras' young population faces major obstacles in their everyday life.

Youth face limited employment and economic opportunities, limited access to social services, and limited access to land and infrastructure. These factors, coupled with the difficulty of escaping or evading the lure of criminal activities, constrain their ability to improve their lives. It is no surprise, then, that crime and insecurity in that country continue to be of great concern.

Hondurans in general face a dire economic situation. They are confronted with high unemployment, dangerous and unsafe working conditions, and limited protection of their rights. Canada's bilateral development program is therefore helping to improve the lives of Hondurans by focusing its investments in sustainable economic growth, food security, access to social services, human rights, and the rule of law.

Our investments from all development channels help contribute to the strategy's three goals: to increase Canadian and hemispheric economic opportunities; to address insecurity and advance freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law through capacity-building; and last, to build a stable foundation for Canada's engagement and increased influence in the hemisphere.

● (1345)

Since 2007, our government has pledged to make Canadian assistance more relevant and effective. Development assistance in Honduras is a testimony to these commitments. Programming focuses on delivering poverty reduction results based on the Honduran national development plan.

What have we accomplished so far?

We are proud to say that our Conservative government has achieved significant results in the areas of food security and sustainable economic growth. As a result of our programming, close to 530,000 people have increased access to nutritious food, including pregnant women and primary school-age girls and boys.

Canada has helped to improve agricultural productivity. Over 15,000 people are benefiting from improved water systems, and 2,800 families have crop storage facilities, greatly reducing post-harvest losses.

Over 1,500 hectares of land have been rehabilitated for the improved production of cocoa and coffee. Eighteen coffee co-operatives now have access to credit to support the production of certified coffee. Honduran coffee is well recognized and appreciated around the world. Coffee production is also an area of comparative

advantage for that country, as Honduras has been reintegrating into the global coffee market.

We are also working to improve access to social services by supporting initiatives that seek to reduce preventable diseases and infant mortality and improve the health care system. Canada has contributed to important advancements in these areas. We have contributed to reducing the percentage of child mortality by 11% in two provinces and have provided health care counselling to 85,000 adolescents.

In the education sector, we are investing \$20 million in the Education for All program, a multi-donor pooled fund to support the Honduran national education program. To date, primary graduation rates have reached 91% from a baseline of 69% in 2008, while dropout rates for grades 1 to 6 have declined during that same period.

This Conservative government strongly believes that continued engagement in development in Honduras is the best way to help that country address its development, security, and human rights challenges. I think we would all agree that trade and development have converging interests in promoting sustainable economic growth and that these interests can serve the people of both Canada and Honduras.

By building on the successes achieved, Canada's development assistance will continue to increase the productivity of small rural producers, connect farmers to markets, and create employment opportunities for the people of Honduras, in particular for women and youth. Canada is well positioned to provide assistance to improve the lives of those most in need, to promote sustainable economic growth, and to encourage synergies between trade and development. Our goal is to create shared prosperity for both of our countries.

This government remains committed to working with the Honduran government to promote sustainable economic growth and a sound, dynamic, and stable Honduran economy. The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement is one of the best ways to support positive change and growth in Honduras.

As a result, I urge all members to support the ratification of the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement.

● (1350)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely shocked that this government, with the complicity of the Liberals, is so actively endorsing the urban legend that economic measures can correct the democratic deficit.

Earlier, I asked if there really was a good example of economic measures resulting in enhanced democracy and respect for human rights. The previous speaker, the parliamentary secretary's Conservative colleague, refused to answer and responded again with a smokescreen.

Can the parliamentary secretary cite for the House an actual example of a real success story resulting from the proposed measures?

Statements by Members

[English]

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we strongly believe in the promotion of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law as principles of Canada's foreign policy. We promote those principles vigorously in our foreign policy throughout the world.

In addition, we have a very aggressive trade promotion agenda, because in addition to fighting for human rights, we believe that economic opportunity and prosperity come through trade. When societies are grown and enhanced, opportunities are created, and human rights situations, the quality of governance, and the stability of government institutions are increased and enhanced. That is what we fundamentally believe, and we will continue that important work.

● (1355)

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary obviously refused to answer my question. He prefers to stay stuck in his daydream.

In the House at this time, Bill C-20 on the Honduras free trade agreement is not even an economic issue. It is a moral issue because in light of the total lack of respect and the crimes committed in Honduras, the government, with the complicity of the Liberals, is supporting a government that tolerates the reign of criminal groups.

It is shameful for the people of Honduras and for Canadians to see this complicity and this support for the type of situation prevailing in Honduras right now. That is incredible.

How can the parliamentary secretary justify this position?

[English]

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat shocked and dismayed that the NDP is happy to have countries such as Honduras simply drift and to not have their development needs, their human rights requirements, and their opportunities for economic growth addressed.

We on this side of the House are focused on each of those important pillars through our development assistance programs, through our focus on human rights, and through this important free trade agreement. This agreement would enhance economic opportunity and, as a result, create improvements in the social, democratic, and human rights conditions in Honduras as well.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are still some things that I simply cannot understand. When an agreement like this is said to be good, even though no one really wants to talk about the human rights situation in the country with which we are about to sign an agreement, that makes absolutely no sense to me.

An agreement with these potential economic gains cannot simply ignore the country's social problems. My colleague mentioned this earlier. We are trying to incorporate this into the debate, because to the NDP, it is an integral part of it.

Is my colleague aware of the human rights problems? Is he at least willing to recognize here in the House that they exist? If so, can he

tell me what this agreement does to show Canada's leadership role in helping the people of Honduras and to demonstrate that Canada takes the issue of human rights very seriously?

[English]

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Speaker, I have spent much of the time during both of my responses and much of the time during my speech speaking about Canada's development assistance program in Honduras and about the economic, social, and human rights conditions in that country. We are focused on those important issues. We are working very hard, both bilaterally through NGOs and as well through multilateral organizations, to improve the situation in Honduras.

In addition, we want to see greater economic hope and opportunity for the people of that country. Through greater hope and opportunity will come jobs and prosperity, an enhanced society, an enhanced democracy, and an enhanced human rights situation. Why does the NDP not understand that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The time for government orders has expired. This matter will return after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, March 8 will not be a day of celebration for all women in Quebec.

The Pauline Marois government has decided to make an election issue out of a charter that will cost women their jobs if they choose to wear a head scarf, even though one of the gains of the women's movement has been greater access to the labour market.

Until that shameful partisan bill is repudiated once and for all, let us think about all the women who suffer because they have chosen to wear a head scarf. Let us affirm the right to express our diversity. We are all Quebeckers and Canadians, without exception.

Happy International Women's Day to women everywhere.

* * *

● (1400)

[English]

PED VIRUS

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Perth—Wellington is among the greatest pork producing regions in the country. Pork producers are rightly concerned about the PED virus, which has spread throughout southern Ontario. I commend the pork producers for their strong efforts to contain the disease.

Statements by Members

Our government-supported strong biosecurity measures on farms remain the best line of defence against PED. As provincial veterinary authorities continue to lead in investigating and tracing the cause of this disease, our government has instructed the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to support these efforts.

In addition to the iPED+ vaccine, approved last month, the CFIA is leading an investigation into any possible links to animal feed.

I thank our pork producers, the Minister of Agriculture, and our government's ongoing efforts, vigilance, and dedication to protecting our farms, an integral part of our economy.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, International Women's Day is this Saturday. I would like to congratulate all women in Canada, especially those in my riding, Honoré-Mercier.

Today, the Rivière-des-Prairies women's centre is celebrating its 30th anniversary. As much as I would like to celebrate with them, I am here in the House, because my constituents gave me a mandate and I am proud to represent them.

Speaking of our role here, 77 of the 308 members of Parliament are women. That is just 25%. Canadian parliamentary democracy has a long way to go.

Still, there is hope. In the 2011 election, the NDP fielded a record number of female candidates. Of the party's 308 candidates, 123—40%—were women. The NDP now has 36 female MPs, which makes ours the caucus with the most women in Canadian history. Our party walks the talk. With the NDP, women have a real opportunity to help build our democracy and to make gender equality a reality.

* * *

[English]

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, black Bramptonians have a rich cultural history and one that I had the pleasure of experiencing during Black History Month at a number of local events.

Praise Cathedral Worship Centre offered an evening of education and entertainment in honour of Black History Month. The theme of Praise Cathedral's celebration was "Dream, Dare, Do". It was an exceptional event. I want to extend special thanks to Bishop Lennox DaCosta Walker, Lady Dorett Walker, and Karen Cunningham, who all played important roles in making the event such a success.

I also attended a Black History Month concert put on by the Brampton chapter of the Congress of Black Women and the United Achievers' Club. It was a great night that included musical and dance performances.

I want to thank Fiona McNeil, the president of the Brampton chapter of the Congress of Black Women and Lucinda Sloyer, the president of the Brampton United Achievers' Club, for inviting me to

participate in this great evening. These events epitomize the pride that black Bramptonians have in their cultural heritage, and I was proud to be part of their celebrations,

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FESTIVAL OF NOWRUZ

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while we are in our ridings meeting with our constituents over the next two weeks, Canadians from many different cultural communities will be celebrating Nowruz, the new year festival.

Nowruz falls on March 21, the equinox, and represents the beginning of spring. The coming of a new spring represents renewal. In preparation for spring, many Canadians will clean their homes and visit with their neighbours. On the day of Nowruz, families gather to enjoy each other's company and celebrate the new year.

The festival of Nowruz exemplifies a wealth of ancient rights and customs and symbolizes the community of a culture that has survived thousands of years. It is celebrated across the Middle East, Central Asia, and right here in Canada.

There is a proud history of celebrating Nowruz in Canada. On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I want to wish those celebrating Nowruz across Canada a very happy new year.

* * *

●(1405)

SERVICE CLUB COUNCIL OF CORNWALL AND DISTRICT

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House once again, so proud of the constituents in my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. I would like to acknowledge the great work being done by a unique organization in my community, the Service Club Council of Cornwall and District.

The city of Cornwall is home to a wide array of service clubs that play a huge part in making our community a better place to live, work, and raise a family, but many of them face the same challenges: difficulty raising money, recruiting new volunteers, and getting the next generation of Canadians interested in volunteerism.

The Service Club Council of Cornwall and District has been active for nearly 70 years, working together on projects and annual events like the Santa Claus parade and the Children's Christmas Fund. Each year they have an annual dinner where the 14 member clubs gather to celebrate their successes. I have had the honour to attend several times.

Service clubs and volunteers are the backbone of a successful community. The Service Club Council of Cornwall and District is a perfect example of that statement.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRE

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, access to the job market and job retention are still major challenges and concerns, particularly for youth. However, I would like to acknowledge the exceptional work of PLACE Rive-Sud, an organization in my riding that is holding its annual job fair today.

This year, PLACE Rive-Sud is celebrating 30 years of excellence and success. It has provided guidance, training and labour market access to over 50,000 people aged 16 and over who live in Longueuil. Last year alone, 4,000 people benefited from the outstanding service provided by the 50 employees who are dedicated to this cause.

This example demonstrates the quality and success of Quebec's youth employment centres. I wish continued success to PLACE Rive-Sud and the work it does in social and economic development.

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[English]

CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to join our hard-working Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in Toronto and Calgary a few weeks ago to announce our Conservative government's Bill C-24, the strengthening Canadian citizenship act, which will strengthen the immense value of Canadian citizenship and ensure that a Canadian passport remains highly regarded around the world.

I also want to personally thank the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for working with me and transferring the contents of my private member's bill, Bill C-425, into his new act. Once this bill becomes law, Canada will fall into line with virtually every other western democratic nation. It will have the ability to strip the citizenship of convicted terrorists. According to a national poll, this measure has the support of over 85% of Canadians from across Canada, including 80% of NDP supporters, 87% of Liberal supporters, and 83% of those who immigrated to Canada.

I call upon the opposition to represent the will of their constituents and support this bill.

* * *

YARMOUTH LIGHTSTATION

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, cap Fourchu, at the mouth of Yarmouth Harbour in Nova Scotia, has been welcoming visitors since 1604, when Samuel de Champlain landed and named the area cap Fourchu. By 1870, Yarmouth was the second largest port of registry in Canada and the cap Fourchu Lightstation had become a very important shipping beacon.

By the 1990s, lighthouses were becoming obsolete. Local citizens of Yarmouth County formed the Friends of the Yarmouth Light Society to preserve this important piece of nautical history. In 2003, the Province of Nova Scotia registered the cap Fourchu Lightstation as a heritage property. cap Fourchu Lightstation is featured on this year's cover of the *Tourism Doers' & Dreamers' Travel Guide* issued by the Province of Nova Scotia.

Congratulations to the amazing volunteers in Yarmouth County who have preserved this icon and have reminded us of our connection to the sea.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, community groups and unions from across Canada are gathered in Ottawa right now to share their terrible problems caused by the changes that the government made to the employment insurance program.

Everyone is concerned that these changes are destroying the economy in many regions and taking a terrible toll on workers in the seasonal industry. Among those workers, women are particularly vulnerable. Since women take on most of the family responsibilities, they will have to resort to withdrawing from the job market altogether rather than taking a job that offers lower wages.

Everyone is concerned about the delays in processing files, the dysfunctional Social Security Tribunal, the way the Conservatives keep disparaging the unemployed, and the way every organization that assists the unemployed is being pushed out.

The NDP hears those concerns and shares them. We will come up with the means to implement a program for workers that gives them back their right to employment insurance.

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● (1410)

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I regret to inform this place that the senior Liberal spokesman for veterans affairs did the unthinkable at committee on Tuesday. Members from across the political spectrum know that the member for Scarborough—Agincourt will stoop low to play cheap partisan games. As a veteran, I condemn his behaviour.

His games on Tuesday, however, backfired, and he indirectly insulted a veteran who was appearing at the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. This member's partisan games must stop, particularly when they insult or demean witnesses appearing at a parliamentary committee.

I call on the member for Scarborough—Agincourt to apologize to the witnesses who appeared on Tuesday. Anything less will demonstrate that the member is simply unfit for the role he has been assigned, and I would urge his leadership to re-evaluate his position.

*Statements by Members***INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day, we celebrate the strength and courage of women's rights activists worldwide. Around the world, women and men are standing on the front lines of struggles for equal rights, access to abortion and birth control, LGBTQ rights, the right to be educated, and, in too many places, human rights as well.

Here at home, indigenous women and their allies are calling for a national inquiry and national action on missing and murdered indigenous women. Every rally, vigil, march, and round dance, held in honour of indigenous women, demonstrates that there is no stopping the tide of voices demanding justice.

[Translation]

This week, Canadians saw a young, courageous female leader oppose and attack rape culture. Anne-Marie Roy, president of the Student Federation of the University of Ottawa, gave a voice to those of us who want to put an end to misogyny on our campuses and in our society.

As we celebrate International Women's Day, let us celebrate all these fights for equality. We want to express our solidarity with these young people who are fighting for women's rights, and we want them to know that together we will succeed.

* * *

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was surprised to hear the Leader of the Opposition's position yesterday on the possibility that some members of his caucus from Quebec support an openly separatist party.

I hope he will call them to order regarding this inconsistency, especially since the leader of the NDP supports a coalition with the Liberal Party of Canada. Imagine a coalition in which the Liberals, the NDP socialists and then separatists who are afraid to admit it are in charge of our future. Unbelievable.

Canadians want serious, motivated and experienced parliamentarians who have solid, ambitious policies.

Our Conservative government, under the strong leadership of our Prime Minister, provides a guarantee for a united, prosperous country with a clear vision for the future.

* * *

NANCY CHAREST

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was with great sadness that we learned of the sudden death of Nancy Charest.

A lawyer, tax expert and member of the National Assembly from 2003 to 2007, then the federal Liberal candidate in Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Nancy was an intelligent, exceptional, energetic and congenial woman with boundless love and pride for her region.

In 2010, I had the pleasure of meeting Nancy during a visit to Mont-Joli to talk about water issues.

We spent the day meeting her constituents and then finished off with a visit to the Maurice Lamontagne Institute research centre. I was immediately struck by her curiosity about the research conducted at the centre.

Nancy always wanted to learn more in order to help her region and promote its interests in Quebec City and Ottawa.

Through her passion and her dedication to the public interest, Nancy Charest was an ambassador unlike any other for the Lower St. Lawrence.

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[English]

MINING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to attend the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada's annual conference this past weekend, in Toronto. This is the largest mining conference in the world, with over 25,000 participants representing 125 countries.

The mining sector is vital to the Canadian economy, and it is particularly critical to my home province of Saskatchewan. I was pleased to meet with a wide range of both junior and medium-sized companies, and was proud to relay our government's support for the industry, right from the exploration phase all the way through to production. I was also encouraged to see many of my hon. colleagues in attendance.

Our government is proud to support the mining industry, and it will continue to promote this vital sector of the Canadian economy.

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● (1415)

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government tried its best today to prevent committee members from hearing testimony from Chief Electoral Officer Marc Mayrand, just like it has been trying to prevent Canadians from having their say on this bill.

It is clear that Conservatives are afraid of consultation. However, that is no surprise after hearing Mr. Mayrand's critique of this unfair bill. He has delivered a point-by-point rebuttal of almost everything that the minister has claimed. Mayrand warned that this bill focuses on voter fraud that does not exist, instead of voter participation, which is a growing problem.

The government refuses to take people at their word and treats law-abiding Canadians like criminals. Meanwhile, Conservatives are happy for millions of dollars to be paid out to political parties without a single receipt.

This bill is an affront to our democracy. New Democrats know it. Canadians know it. In 2015, we will start fixing what is broken in Ottawa.

THE PICTOU ADVOCATE

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I was shocked to learn that *The Pictou Advocate* newspaper, in Pictou, Nova Scotia, recently ran an editorial cartoon featuring the Nazi flag flying over Canada's Parliament.

It was here in this Parliament that members before us sent our soldiers to fight darkness and evil. Our men and women bravely fought for Canada in the Second World War, defending our liberty, freedom, and values. It was here that members from all parties voted to honour the memory of lives so viciously taken by Nazi brutality, sending a strong message that human rights, the rule of law, and human decency will always prevail, and that never again would we allow such atrocities to take place.

The crass and casual use of the Nazi flag flying over Canada's cradle of democracy is not only an insult to our men and women in uniform, it belittles the memory of the victims and the survivors who suffered at the hands of Nazi dictators. We condemn this shameful and cowardly act, and call on *The Pictou Advocate* to immediately retract the hurtful image and apologize.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, grain farmers and the western provinces are pleading with the federal government to finally act in order to move the millions of tonnes of Canadian grain that are at risk of rotting because there is no transportation available.

There is a desperate need for stricter rules and harsher penalties for rail companies that shirk their duties and take our farmers hostage. The House will break tomorrow for two weeks, and the Conservatives still have not done anything about this.

What are they waiting for? When will they help our farmers and get the grain moving?

[English]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition is taking a belated interest in our farmers.

For our government, the economy is our top priority, and certainly the agricultural sector and our grain farmers are a very important part of our economy. Farmers need a reliable, efficient, logistics system. We will be taking action to ensure that system meets their needs.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they do not need a logistics system; they need a government that acts.

Yesterday the Minister of Agriculture said that new legislation to force rail carriers to get—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Oral Questions

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, thousands of prairie grain farmers are having their livelihood held hostage by the railways.

Yesterday the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food said that new legislation to force rail carriers to get this grain moving again would be brought forward “at the right time and place”.

Would the Minister of Transport, who is responsible for this file, finally act, assume her responsibility for this crisis, and help our prairie farmers get their grain to market?

• (1420)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I say that the opposition leader is very late to this file. Our government, on the other hand, has been actively engaged with all stakeholders on—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. parliamentary secretary now has the floor.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: That is right, Mr. Speaker. I have the floor.

I am telling the opposition that our government has been actively engaged on this file for a very long time, with all stakeholders in the industry. Farmers know that we will take action.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over a million Canadian seniors do not have a driver's licence. Many of them use the Elections Canada voter cards as identification.

In fact, the Chief Electoral Officer, who knows better than anyone else, says that the names and addresses on voter cards are more up to date than the information on driver's licences.

Why is the government banning the use of voter cards if they contain fewer errors than driver's licences?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, people do not need a driver's licence to vote in Canada. In fact, they do not even need photo identification. There are 39 forms of identification allowed.

[English]

These include old age security cards, hospital and medical clinic cards, hospital bracelets worn by residents of long-term care facilities, Veterans Affairs Canada health cards, and I could go on. There are many ID forms on that list of 39 that are specifically available to people of retirement age. We would encourage Elections Canada to ensure that those people know about those forms of ID.

Oral Questions

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's Chief Electoral Officer testified today that the unfair elections act proposed by the Conservatives would in fact allow them to dress up campaign advertising as fundraising appeals to get around all existing campaign spending limits in the next election.

Mr. Mayrand said this change would make it “difficult, if not impossible to enforce” spending limits altogether.

This is exactly what we have been saying since day one. The only reason that the Conservatives are doing this is to stack the deck for the next election.

What other reason could there be?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, point number one, the NDP excluded all fundraising expenses from its own leadership race, a position against which it is arguing right now.

Second, the Chief Electoral Officer is wrong on this point, as well as on other points. The bill we are bringing forward, the fair elections act, would require that all mass-calling scripts and all autodial scripts be kept for a year, so they can be available for investigators to examine them.

Finally, there would be external audits, which would allow the auditor to determine if money was spent on fundraising calls versus other calls.

There would be also a purpose section in this particular provision of the bill.

There are many layers of protection.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister has stood in this House, week after week, to make fanciful claims about election irregularities and voter fraud.

Today, the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada demolished each and every one of those false arguments before committee. He said there was “no evidence” connecting administrative errors at Elections Canada to any form of electoral fraud whatsoever.

Will the minister finally admit that the only evidence of voter fraud that he has ever had is the fake testimony of the member of Parliament for Mississauga—Streetsville?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, this gives me occasion to correct the explicit factual error in the CEO's testimony when he said that the errors linked to vouching were strictly record-keeping that would not compromise an election.

This is what page 10 of his own report said:

...the Supreme Court made it clear that such errors in other circumstances could contribute to a court overturning an election.

That sounds pretty serious to me.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the grain crisis in western Canada, the Minister of Transport could

act today under section 47 of the Canada Transportation Act to implement an emergency solution.

She could, in addition to that, seek unanimous consent for amendments to service level legislation to define service, to measure performance, and to pay damages to farmers when the railways fail. She could do those things.

Why is the minister failing in her responsibility to western Canadian farmers?

• (1425)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I explained, the economy is the number one priority for our government, and certainly the grain sector plays an active role in the strength of our economy.

Farmers deserve a reliable and efficient logistics system, but a key element of the logistics system is the railway system. The railway system has been performing poorly.

Farmers know that we will take action.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have repeatedly asked the government about its decision to gut funding for the building Canada infrastructure fund at the end of this month.

It is being cut by 87%. This fiscal year, building Canada's budget is running at \$1.6 billion. Next fiscal year, starting April 1, the building Canada budget drops to just \$210 million. The difference is a cut of 87%.

The government does not deny it. It just talks around it. The question remains. Why is it imposing this huge infrastructure cut on local municipalities at the beginning of next month?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has nearly tripled average annual infrastructure investments since 2006.

The economic action plan 2013 announced \$70 billion over 10 years, a decade. We have to look at all 10 years, including the \$53 billion for provincial, territorial, and municipal infrastructure.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, Conservative cuts to building Canada funding are laid out in painful detail in its own 2013 budget plan at page 178, table 3.3.1. It is there in black and white for everybody to see.

Building Canada is chopped by 87%, starting on April 1, just 25 days from now. Municipalities get dinged this coming year and the year after that, and every year until 2019.

Here is the question. Is table 3.3.1 true, or is the budget plan a lie? Canadian municipalities need to know.

Oral Questions

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, he has to look at the 10-year plan. It is a 10-year plan.

We have indexed the gas tax fund. We have doubled it. That is now permanent in the law; 71% of this plan is going straight to the municipalities of the country, and FCM is supporting that plan.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in committee today, the Chief Electoral Officer, Marc Mayrand, pointed out that political parties are reimbursed \$33 million after each election, without providing a single receipt or piece of documentation.

The electoral reform bill is not a game-changer for political parties, but it will treat each and every voter as a potential cheat.

Why has the government introduced a bill that does not express any trust in voters, but shows complete trust in political parties?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will be adding mandatory auditing of every cent of election expense money that parties are hoping to have reimbursed. That auditing process is new.

In addition, according to section 435, the Chief Electoral Officer can choose to ask for more information before reimbursing parties with taxpayers' money. He already has that authority and can exercise it.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we called for in a motion that was unanimously adopted in the House two years ago, and it is still not in the bill.

Mr. Mayrand also explained to the committee members that there is not a single democracy in the world whose elections agency has had restrictions imposed on it by the government in power regarding the information it can share with the public, including information about electoral fraud.

Can the minister name another democracy that muzzles its head of elections in this way?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are none, and our Chief Electoral Officer will not be muzzled either. He will still be able to talk about democracy in Canada.

[English]

However, she refers to a motion in the House of Commons in which we voted for Elections Canada's powers, and it said we would support giving him the power to request all necessary documents from political parties to ensure compliance with the Elections Act. He already has that power.

• (1430)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Marc Mayrand has joined a chorus of other experts and a growing number of Canadians who are simply not buying the minister's weak explanation for his radical rewriting of the Elections Act.

Mr. Mayrand critiqued the bizarre distinction the Conservatives are trying to make between voter fraud and voter participation.

How can the minister possibly disagree with the Chief Electoral Officer when he says, "...the main challenge for our electoral democracy is not voter fraud, but voter participation"?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will simply read Elections Canada's own report, which says of irregularities related to vouching and procedures like it that, "The courts refer to such serious errors as 'irregularities' which can result in votes being declared invalid".

There were 50,000 such irregularities in the last election related to vouching, according to Elections Canada's own report.

If the NDP wants to take its message that people should be able to vote without any form of identification, that is fine. We on this side of the House of Commons will protect the integrity of the system.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is about our elections, the cornerstone of our democracy, and all we get from the minister is weak and misleading excuses.

The Chief Electoral Officer said people are increasingly refusing to co-operate with Elections Canada's investigations. Since most of these are about Conservative wrongdoing, can the minister tell us if he will now agree to give Elections Canada the power to compel testimony?

Before he claims that these are extraordinary powers, we are only asking for the same powers the Competition Bureau already has.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner of Canada Elections already has all of the investigative powers of a police force, which could investigate violent crime, for example.

We will ensure that he keeps all of those powers. In fact, the fair elections act gives him sharper teeth and a longer reach. That includes tougher penalties for existing offences and more offences that will allow him to protect the system and protect our democracy.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at committee today, Chief Electoral Officer Marc Mayrand pointed to serious discrepancies in the Elections Act around expenses for leadership candidates.

He emphasized the urgent need to amend the act to include many excluded expenses, as well as non-monetary contributions, within spending limits.

Oral Questions

Does the minister agree with the Chief Electoral Officer that these new loan provisions in the unfair elections act need to be amended in order to be effective; and will the minister acknowledge that this is one of the many major problems in his bill?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, if there is an exclusion that he wants to revisit, like when the NDP excluded all fundraising expenses from its spending limits, for example, first he should contact his party, which makes its own rules for leadership races. Second, I invite him to bring forward any amendments.

However, the fair elections act will close the loans loophole that allowed the Liberal Party to take hundreds of thousands of dollars in illegal donations simply by calling it unrepaid debt.

That is a step in the right direction. That is the fair elections act.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, new RCMP documents show the extent of illegal lobbying that was carried on by the Prime Minister's former chief adviser Bruce Carson, along with the help of people like Dan Gagnier, the adviser to the Liberal leader.

He illegally lobbied numerous Conservative cabinet ministers. None of them blew the whistle on him. He lobbied the Clerk of the Privy Council and even the Prime Minister's good friend Nigel Wright.

Will the Prime Minister tell us: When was he informed about this illegal lobbying that was happening among his ministers, his public servants, and his staff?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course these allegations relate to the actions of a private citizen who obviously did not get a government contract. As soon as the government found out about these allegations we referred them to the Lobbying Commissioner and the Ethics Commissioner, and we informed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Again, like any Canadian, if this gentleman is found to have broken any laws, he should suffer under the full consequences of the law.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this so-called private citizen is a convicted fraud artist who was personally appointed by the Prime Minister to be his chief insider. He was such an insider that the Conservatives called him “the secret sauce”. This is what the sauce was. He was using his plum position to benefit his bottom line by setting up deals that took advantage of first nations.

Why did the Prime Minister appoint a convicted fraud artist to a plum position and then allow him to continue on lobbying right under his nose and not take any steps for the Privy Council or for his chief of staff?

•(1435)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these allegations are concerning a private citizen.

At the same time, this allows me to highlight the fact that it was this government that brought forward a Lobbying Commissioner and an Ethics Commissioner and that strengthened the laws to ensure that people do not take advantage of their positions.

As soon as the government found out, it referred this to the RCMP. If this gentleman or any person found in contravention of the law is found guilty then they should suffer under the full consequences of the law that, by and large, this government has brought in.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind members that Bruce Carson was one of the Prime Minister's key advisors. He is best known for devising a scheme for making money on the backs of first nations.

Doug Black, who was appointed to the Senate by this Prime Minister, called his illegal lobbying the “secret sauce”. As a public office-holder, Bruce Carson was not allowed to engage in lobbying activities.

The question is simple. Is the Prime Minister aware of Bruce Carson's illegal lobbying of Daniel Gagnier of the Energy Policy Institute of Canada, who is also the next co-chair of the 2015 election campaign?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for this question. These are major allegations against a private citizen.

At the same time, I would like to point out the good work that this government is doing to guarantee the highest ethical standards. I am referring to the work of the Ethics Commissioner and the Commissioner of Lobbying. When the government heard these allegations, it immediately notified the RCMP.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, we have just heard a new story that Nigel Wright hid things from the Prime Minister. We are starting to see a pattern here.

It is hard to believe that Nigel Wright forgot to tell his boss that the man working for him, who advised him and was part of his transition team, had just happened to stop by the office. However, he never said that.

It seems as though a lot of ministers in the current government, including the member for Mégantic—L'Érable, have tried the so-called secret sauce. It is fantastic.

Why does the Prime Minister always surround himself with people who break the law?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course the member's assertions are absolutely, completely ridiculous.

Oral Questions

On this side of the House we surround ourselves with people who put the interests of this country first, who work day in and day out to make this country bigger, better, stronger, and to create jobs, unlike the opposition. The Leader of the Opposition surrounds himself with people who would want to break apart the country and then allows them the opportunity to get up in this House day after day and ask questions of a government, while at the same time he is making cheques to the separatist cause in Quebec.

We on this side of the House will stand up for Canada, will stand up for taxpayers, and will continue to build a bigger, better, stronger, unified Canada.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today at committee the Chief Electoral Officer confirmed the unfair elections act is an attack on Elections Canada's ability to enforce the law. He said, "Without a power to compel testimony...the Commissioner's ability to carry out his investigations will remain limited". The Conservatives do not want to give him the power to compel because they are afraid it may reveal the source of fraudulent elections calls.

When will the Conservatives admit that this bill was designed to protect the Conservatives responsible for election fraud?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner of Canada Elections already has the same investigative powers as a police force. He can use those powers right now. In fact, those powers are increased by the fair elections act, which gives him sharper teeth and a longer reach, including making it an offence for anyone to obstruct his investigation or give him false information. It also creates tougher penalties for existing offences.

That is what Canadians have asked for. That is what the fair elections act delivers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, in committee, the Chief Electoral Officer confirmed that the Conservatives' electoral reform bill reduces Elections Canada's ability to fully enforce the act. Mr. Mayrand said that without the power to compel testimony, the commissioner's ability to carry out his investigations will remain limited.

The Conservatives do not want to grant that power, for fear that we would find out the source of the fraudulent election calls.

When will the Conservatives stop protecting those responsible for election fraud?

• (1440)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the commissioner already has the same investigative powers as a police officer. Furthermore, the fair elections act will increase the commissioner's powers by making him independent and allowing him to impose harsher penalties for offences committed, while Canadians who participate in elections will have to abide by more laws.

This bill will help protect our democracy. I would appreciate the Liberals' support.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the commissioner had those powers that he says he needs, then why would he be asking for more time and time again?

The Chief Electoral Officer today said in testimony that this would have been an essential tool. As he put it, the right not to co-operate has become well-known when it comes to testimony and more and more people are not co-operating. He knows the bill does not have the sharp teeth that he is looking for.

Electoral commissioners in other provinces have the power to compel testimony. Why does this commissioner no longer have it?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member perhaps accidentally stated a falsehood. He said that the commissioner will "no longer have it". He does not have it now. In fact, police officers do not have that power. The power to compel does not exist for police forces across the country. The commissioner has the same powers that police officers have.

The NDP and the Liberals are looking for an excuse as to why their false allegations have not been validated. This is a pretty weak one.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the rally for Loretta Saunders and throughout the special committee hearings, we heard from friends, families, and communities of missing and murdered indigenous women. They are asking us for answers and for justice, but also asking for solutions to end the disappearances and murders of indigenous women.

How much longer will they have to wait? Will the government finally listen to the call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the death of Loretta Saunders is an undeniable tragedy for her family and for all.

Let us be clear. Our government has passed over 30 justice and public safety initiatives aimed specifically at responding to violence. The individuals involved in this terrible tragedy have been arrested. They are in custody. That is a justice system that works.

We are holding offenders more accountable. We are putting more money into initiatives to help defray this type of behaviour in society. We are putting more money into aboriginal justice initiatives on reserve, and the members opposite continually oppose us.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over 800 indigenous women have been murdered or have disappeared since 1990. For victims' families and their communities, the status quo is not acceptable.

Oral Questions

As Loretta Saunders' cousin said, "We must not let this happen again without our government putting some serious effort...into a public inquiry".

It is time to honestly acknowledge the problem and deal with the root causes of violence against indigenous women. It is time to work in partnership and end this tragedy.

Will the government listen to Canadians and call a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member cares deeply about this issue, as do all members. I say to her honestly that this is well past the time for more studies and inquiries. There have been almost 40 in this country in the last number of years.

We are taking action. We are putting tougher sanctions in place. We are giving police more tools to investigate crimes like the death of Loretta Saunders. As the member has asked for, we are putting more programs in place to support women and girls on reserve. We are taking substantive action to help address this issue, not study it, not talk about it. We are taking action that gets results.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 800 aboriginal women have gone missing or been murdered. The Conservatives' strategy is clearly not working, because aboriginal women are still going missing and being killed.

Kelly Nicole Goforth, Heather Ballantyne, Cassandra Joan Desjarlais, Miranda McKinney, Jodi Roberts, Tricia Boisvert and Rocelyn Gabriel have all disappeared over the past six months.

How many more women will have to be killed or disappear before the government takes action and launches a national public inquiry?

• (1445)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, each and every one of these cases that the member cited, I can assure her, the police are investigating. The police are doing their job, and we are helping them by putting in place a national centre for missing persons, creating a national website for missing persons, improving law-enforcement databases, developing community safety plans with aboriginal communities, supporting the development of public awareness materials, and ending house arrest for serious crimes like sexual assault. We brought in mandatory minimum penalties for serious crimes, ended the faint hope clause, toughened penalties for production of pornography and date rape drugs, and ended two-for-one sentences for sexual offence court. We are—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives keep telling us that they are doing something, but it is clear that what they are doing is not working.

Over 800 women have been murdered or gone missing since 1990, but the government is refusing to shed light on the situation. We waited too long to shed light on what happened in Indian residential schools.

Can the government avoid making the same mistake and launch a public inquiry into the murders and disappearances of aboriginal women?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again I say to my hon. friend, with the greatest respect, the biggest mistake that we could make on this issue would be to spend more time studying it. Those studies have told us we need stronger criminal justice initiatives. We need more substantive tools for police to investigate violent crime, to hold offenders accountable. We need more programs directly on-reserve to help with aboriginal justice issues. We need to do more to protect women and girls in this country. That is exactly what this government is doing and I sincerely urge the hon. member to support those initiatives rather than to simply talk about the issue.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada and our G7 partners and other allies have spoken with one voice in condemning President Putin's military intervention in Ukraine. We are resolute in our view that Ukraine's territorial integrity must be respected.

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs please provide the House with an update on the latest developments in Ukraine?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we learned the troubling news that in just 10 days, the Crimean parliament wants to hold a referendum on leaving Ukraine and joining the Russian federation. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a clear act of aggression. It is a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and a clear violation of its territorial integrity.

Canada will not recognize any so-called "referendum" in a region that is under military occupation. It is wrong and we will not stand for it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after calling for emission regulations for the oil and gas sector earlier this week, Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall recommended yesterday that his Conservative friends impose a carbon tax.

Oral Questions

Clearly, Brad Wall understands that the federal government is not doing enough when it comes to the environment.

What do the Conservatives have to say to this radical environmentalist who wants a carbon tax?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is taking strong actions against climate change, and I am proud of a government that is getting things done. We have a sector-by-sector regulatory approach that allows us to protect both our environment and our economy. This is way different than when the leader of the official opposition was environment minister for Quebec, when Greenpeace actually named June 13, “Thomas Mulcair Smog Day”.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of the Environment has been in this House long enough to know that even when quoting something, we are not allowed to do indirectly what we are not allowed to do directly.

The hon. member for Halifax.

* * *

● (1450)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Well, Mr. Speaker, it is not just Brad Wall who is calling out the federal government. Jim Prentice now has the very difficult task of selling the problematic Northern Gateway pipeline to B.C. first nations, after Conservatives utterly failed to meaningfully consult before they approved the project.

Will the government now act, or have Jim Prentice and Brad Wall just become the newest members of the environmental radical club?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government will thoroughly review the joint panel report and consult with first nations who are potentially impacted by the Northern Gateway proposal. We will complete the consultations and then we will make a decision.

Our government will only allow projects to go ahead if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has confirmed that funding is being cut for all 18 of Canada's Circles of Support and Accountability.

These volunteer-based programs hold high-risk sex offenders accountable for their behaviour in the community when they are out of the parole system. Their success rate is extremely high. Circles of Support and Accountability work. They protect our kids and make our communities safer, and yet the Conservatives are cutting them.

Will the minister please explain this short-sighted decision that puts kids at risk?

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is asking Correctional Service Canada to reconsider that particular decision.

Right across this country, Canadian families know that they can count on this Conservative government to make sure that our children are kept safe from sexual predators.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that the minister does not think that his responsibility to protect our communities ends when offenders are released.

The circles of support and accountability program has a proven track record. It helps reduce recidivism among sex offenders and makes our communities safer.

This program is so effective that other governments have decided to use it as a model in developing their own programs.

Why did the minister decide to eliminate the program and why not simply reverse that decision immediately?

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if that member was listening to my last answer, but the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is asking Correctional Service Canada to reconsider that decision.

However, this does give me an opportunity to talk about our record on keeping children safe. In fact, we just introduced another bill to keep children safe, and that is going to include measures to end the two-for-one sentencing for child sex offenders. No more two-for-one specials when it comes to our children. We are also establishing the high-risk child sex offender database. We believe parents have the right to know where sexual predators are.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Conservative government have failed to meet the needs of our prairie farmers.

The Canada Transportation Act must be amended. We need the changes, but the Minister of Transport does not even have the courage to answer questions to meet those needs.

We are challenging the Minister of Transport to stand in her place and make a commitment to make the changes that are necessary to protect our farmers out west.

Oral Questions

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the crop this year has been quite large: 76 million tonnes, which is 33% more than we have experienced before in this country. This is great for farmers, but right now farmers have a serious issue: they need to get their product to market. That is why what members will see from this government and from this side of the House is not empty rhetoric, it is not temper tantrums; it is action.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have just learned that there is not one single uniformed clinical psychologist employed by the Department of National Defence—not one. The minister's gross incompetence has led to a tragic failure in providing mental health services to injured soldiers.

The minister has been forced to apologize for insulting a grieving family, with a one-cent cheque. How many more tragedies and failures must military families endure before this minister listens to his own mental health experts about the needs of armed forces members?

When will he stop making excuses and act?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is insulting is the Liberal Party's inability to support any of the measures to help our ill and injured men and women, or our veterans, for that matter.

That said, we have increased the budget in health care. We are hiring more mental health professionals. We are making this a priority. We have made it a priority, and we will continue to do so.

* * *

● (1455)

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just last month credit card companies and banks assured the finance committee that customers will be reimbursed if their credit cards are used for fraudulent online transactions, but now they are renegeing on their so-called zero liability policy. The banks' complex electronic access agreements do not match what they are saying.

Will the minister make sure that Canadians are not left on the hook for other people's fraud? When will the Minister of Finance stop allowing the banks and credit card companies to take advantage of Canadian consumers?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government takes the issue of fraud very seriously. We have been consulting with Canadians to update the consumer protection code. It is very important. I am meeting with various bank executives tomorrow and on Monday in Toronto. It is a subject that we need to pay a lot of attention to, including the issue of identity fraud.

I am more concerned, actually, with the Liberal leader's idea of being able to balance the budget automatically. I know that we are taking a break and that St. Patrick's Day is coming up, so I hope that he catches that little person, that little leprechaun.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, some credit card companies seem to be renegeing on their commitment concerning their zero liability policy. The zero liability policy does not apply in cases of fraud committed with a PIN, nor does it apply when people give their security code for online purchases. Once again, the Minister of Finance must recognize that voluntary measures simply do not work.

When will the minister bring in binding regulations to fix the flaws in the zero liability policy?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would listen more closely to the member opposite and the other members opposite in the official opposition if they had not voted against every consumer protection initiative that was brought before the House over more than eight years, including the consumer protection code.

It is easy to say these things, but it is not easy to do them. We have been doing them, and we will continue to consult and to improve them.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian veterans are admired for their leadership and their teamwork. They are well trained and hard-working, and they have an important role to play in Canada's workforce.

Will the Minister of Veterans Affairs please update the House on how our government is leading by example by placing veterans ahead of the pack for jobs in the federal government?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his question. We are helping retrain injured soldiers with up to \$75,800 for university or college training programs. We are opening private sector career opportunities with programs within the public service, such as Helmets to Hardhats and Hire a Veteran. For the first time in generations, veterans with three years of honourable service will have preferential treatment for entry into the federal public service.

This government is breaking new ground for veterans' benefits, while the other parties are breaking their promises by voting against them.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see that the Minister of Transport has finally doffed her muzzle and is prepared to answer some questions about western grain transportation. She accuses the opposition of empty rhetoric, but the fact of the matter is that we are concerned about empty railcars, empty ships, empty terminals, and empty bank accounts for farmers.

There is a \$5-billion hole in farmers' bank accounts this winter. The government said it is going to act. When will that be? Will it be before the weekend?

• (1500)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the hon. member did not try to call me a dog in the House of Commons by assuming that I have a muzzle or anything like that.

I will get past that and answer that we have real concerns with respect to what is happening in the movement of grain in our logistics chain. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has been working with his people and I have been working my stakeholders, but we are at a point where we understand that action must be taken, and that is what we will do.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can be ashamed of this type of behaviour.

Community organizations that help the less fortunate, such as Entraide chez nous in my riding, in Longueuil, are struggling. Communities have a great need for these groups, which are putting on fewer and fewer tax preparation clinics because of the Conservatives' cuts to the Canada Revenue Agency. These clinics are vital, however.

We have learned that the main estimates contain new cuts to the agency.

Will the government stop targeting the vulnerable and the organizations that help them and reverse these ill-considered cuts?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CRA's volunteer tax preparation clinics are essential because they help seniors and low-income Canadians prepare their income tax returns.

There have been no cuts to this program's budget.

[English]

However, in Quebec the program is delivered jointly with Revenu Québec. CRA works diligently with Quebec to ensure that the differences in our delivery models and training models do not impact the support provided to these important community organizations.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have always been a huge proponent of palliative care

Oral Questions

supports in Canada and I am pleased to see the level of investment that our government has made in this area to help Canadians receive the compassionate end-of-life care they need.

Can the Minister of Health please update the House on some of the investments that our government has made recently in this area?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga for that question and for his commitment to this very important issue.

In fact, since 2006, our government has invested \$43 million to support palliative care research, and today I was very pleased to deliver an additional \$3 million to the Pallium Foundation of Canada to support training in palliative care for front-line health care workers.

Our government remains committed to delivering support to Canadian families who are caring for loved ones in need of palliative care at their end of life in a compassionate and high-quality way.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. Réjean Genest (Shefford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of Shefford do not understand Canada Post's reckless decision to eliminate door-to-door mail delivery.

Once again, the Conservatives are targeting seniors and people with disabilities—the most vulnerable people in our society. However, Canada Post is not offering them any alternatives.

When will the government work to improve services to the public instead of doing away with them?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said before in the House, Canada Post is facing a real crisis in terms of the lack of mail that is being put through: one billion pieces. In the past, it has taken the decision not to deliver directly to houses. In fact, two-thirds of Canadian households are like that. Canada Post is going to be moving in its plan to removing that from the other one-third of Canadian households, while of course working with concerns that people have regarding seniors and the disabled.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, during the 2006 crisis in Lebanon and after the 2009 earthquake in Haiti, the government issued guidelines allowing non-Canadian parents to accompany their Canadian minor children to Canada. Again last week, two Canadian children—Gabriel, 3 and Laya, 4—were unable to come to Canada because their Syrian mother was denied a visa. The only reasons provided were the war in Syria and the possibility that they may not be able to return home. I should add that this file was followed by the minister's office.

Why is there still no special guideline for Syria?

Business of the House

● (1505)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were not aware of the situation of the parents of these two young children. We are keen to know the details and investigate this matter.

Canada is very proud of its role in Syria. We have invested more than \$6 million to address the needs of the millions of refugees and displaced persons in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. We will continue to monitor their situation, their humanitarian needs, and their needs as potential immigrants.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if I could get unanimous consent from the members opposite. To an issue arising in question period today, I would like to table the initiatives that we have taken as a government to address murdered and missing women, the 40 reports that have now been completed in the last number of years and the over 30 justice and public safety bills that relate specifically to violence against women and girls. Do I have unanimous consent?

The Speaker: The minister may well know that as a minister he does not need to ask for consent from the House, as long as they are in both official languages and as long as they are here. If they are, then he can table away.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see that the minister is busy at his desk looking for some possible papers to table. Now that he has made the commitment to table the documents, when can we anticipate that they will in fact be tabled?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, they will be tabled in five minutes.

The Speaker: I would just like to draw the attention of the Minister of Justice to the pages who are conveniently located in front of the Chair. There are several pages in the room at most times of the day, especially during question period, and rather than having to throw papers on the floor or walk across while the Speaker is trying to move on, the pages would be happy to help the minister.

It being Thursday, how about we move on to the Thursday question.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North has another point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice provided me with copies, but they are all in English. I would ask if—

The Speaker: Order, please. I am going to stop the member there.

In order to be tabled, the documents need to be in both official languages. In order to be handed from one member to another they can be in any language they happen to be in. The minister has made a commitment to come back to table them, and I am sure that at that time, we can all trust they will be in both official languages. If not, we will take appropriate action.

To the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer, I certainly cannot wait for her to put the Thursday question.

I apologize to the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer, but the Minister of Finance is rising on a point of order.

The hon. Minister of Finance has the floor.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder when the member for Wascana will apologize to the Minister of Transport for his misogynist remarks.

● (1510)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, human beings in this world can be muzzled too. It does not just apply to other kinds of beings. However, the point here is clearly that farmers in western Canada are in severe difficulty and we want answers from the Conservative government. If it helps to get those answers and to get that action for farmers, I am quite happy to withdraw any muzzling remark. Let us have some action.

An hon. member: That is not an apology.

The Speaker: I will certainly treat it as such.

The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer will now ask the Thursday question.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Nycote Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the Conservatives broke their own record for shutting down debate by using time allocation for the 52nd and 53rd time since the 2011 election. Add this to six closures—most recently on debate related to the fabricated evidence that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville presented to the House of Commons—and you have 59 instances of the Conservatives using the Standing Orders to shut down debate in the House. That is quite the record and quite the legacy.

The government House leader's command of the Standing Orders is so exceptional that today he forced time allocation of one sitting day on a bill that was slated to pass in less time than that. We were actually in favour of the bill and could have passed it fairly quickly. This prevented other work from being done. It is incredible what we are seeing in the House right now.

Today, in its latest stroke of parliamentary brilliance, the government tried to sabotage the testimony given by the Chief Electoral Officer in the committee hearings on its unfair elections act, Bill C-23. Unfortunately after stumbling out of the gates, the Conservatives were forced to abandon their plan.

The Conservatives' disdain for our democracy and its institutions would be shocking if they did not make such a regular display of it. Canadians deserve much better than a government that behaves as though it is above the law.

Government Orders

My question for the parliamentary leader is this: what brilliant tactics does he have in store for the House after the riding weeks that will further display his dazzling command of the procedures and practices of this place?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. whip for the opposition for her very kind comments about the abilities on this side of the House with regard to procedure. Of course, I am only as good as the team that I have.

However, I will say that one thing I have tried to outline and to make clear over some period of time is that the use of time allocation is very distinct from the use of closure. We have chosen an approach in this government to use time allocation as a scheduling device to set an amount of time that we believe is appropriate for debate on any particular issue, which, as the hon. member in her own comments confirmed, in some cases results in even more time being allocated than is necessary for debate.

One of the benefits, though, is that the time does not have to be used. If all speakers complete their discussion of the subject, the debate can collapse and we can move on to other matters. So, really, no time is to be lost from that approach. It is a very positive thing, one that allows certainty for the benefit of all members about how much debate we will have, when votes will happen, and when decisions will be made. That is the most important thing for us in our work up here: making decisions and getting the job done.

As for this morning, I know that the NDP keeps seeing conspiracies and ghosts behind curtains, particularly the House leader for the NDP, who has that concern.

I think everyone knows that the only time one can move these time allocation motions—and we do not need to have a great command of the Standing Orders to know this—is at the start of government orders, at the start of the day. So I really had no choice.

However, the committee had considerable flexibility, which it did exercise. There was no conspiracy. There was no obstruction.

I hope that the opposition House leader will take the benefit of the two weeks to calm down, hopefully look around, see that there are no people waiting behind every curtain and every tree, out to get him, and that some of the conspiracies he imagines are simply not there. It will lower his blood pressure. It will make his life much more comfortable, in total.

I know that the opposition whip will share that advice from me, with him.

• (1515)

[Translation]

This afternoon we will continue debating Bill C-20, Canada-Honduras Economic Growth and Prosperity Act, at second reading.

Tomorrow, we will conclude the second reading debate on Bill C-25, Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Act.

Then, we will return to our constituencies, where we will have a chance to reconnect with our real bosses.

[English]

When we return on Monday, March 24, the House will have the seventh and final allotted day. At the end of that day, we will consider the supplementary estimates, as well as interim supply, so that these bills will be able to pass through the other place before the end of our fiscal year.

The government's legislative agenda for the balance of that week will focus on protecting Canadians. Tuesday, March 25 will see us start the second reading debate on Bill C-22, the energy safety and security act, a bill that will implement world-class safety standards in the offshore and nuclear sectors. That evening we will finish the debate on the motion to concur in the first report of the foreign affairs committee respecting the situation of Jewish refugees.

On Wednesday, March 26, we will consider Bill C-5, the offshore health and safety act, at report stage and third reading. This bill will complement legislation already passed by the provincial legislatures in Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador, given the shared jurisdiction that exists in the offshore sector.

On Thursday, March 27, we will have the fourth day of second reading debate on Bill C-13, the protecting Canadians from online crime act. Through this bill, our government is demonstrating its commitment to ensuring that our children are safe from online predators and online exploitation.

Finally, on Friday, March 28, I hope that we will be able to start the second reading debate on Bill C-17, the protecting Canadians from unsafe drugs act, also known as Vanessa's law.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA-HONDURAS ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, an act to implement the free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, the agreement on environmental cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras and the agreement on labour cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to be here today to have the opportunity to speak about the benefits of the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement for Canadian businesses, and in particular for Canadian investors and service providers.

Our Conservative government has refused to sit on the sidelines while other countries go around the world securing better markets for their products and services and more favourable treatment for their investors. Canada's prosperity requires expansion beyond our borders into new markets for economic opportunities that serve to grow Canada's exports and investment.

Government Orders

I have to compliment the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Trade, and the parliamentary secretary for international trade, for the work they have done, and the steady and secure commitment they have had to ensuring we have free trade agreements around the world. I also want to include the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, who has done some tremendous work on this file as well.

That is quite a contrast to what we have seen in the past, and what we see from the official opposition. Liberals were in government for 13 long and agonizing years for Canadians. While they were there, trade was not a priority for them. Certainly for the few years that I was in Parliament when we were in opposition, trade was never a priority for the Liberal government of the time. In fact, during those 13 long years in office, the Liberals only signed three trade agreements. That was at a time when trade was expanding all around the world. They did not see that it was any type of priority.

In contrast, our Conservative government has reached agreements with 37 countries. We can see the difference there. There were 3 that were reached over 13 years, and in the time we have been in government, there have been 37 of those agreements. We are even expanding. We are improving the three agreements that were reached under the Liberals, to try to maximize the benefits they produce for hard-working Canadians and their families. Once again, the Liberals have proved they just cannot get the job done.

Actually, three agreements is far better than what we would have had if the NDP had ever found its way to power. We have had some extreme statements from some of its members about their attitudes toward trade. The NDP member for British Columbia Southern Interior wrote that free trade agreements “threaten the very existence of our nation”, or when the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour said that trade agreements are job-destroying.

We see their perspective, but it is not grounded in reality. Actually, the NDP trade critic has been quoted as saying that this trade agreement, along with ones with Colombia, Peru, Chile, Costa Rica, and Panama, are “not key economies with any kind of strategic value for Canada”. It speaks about the NDP and its commitment to trade, but it also speaks about its commitment to those economies that are smaller than ours and those people whose place in the world we can help to improve. New Democrats have consistently opposed any efforts to open up new markets for Canadian businesses. Apparently, they also oppose the opportunity for smaller nations to open up economic opportunities for their people as well. They are just ideologically opposed to international trade.

We heard a number of times earlier today from their critics wanting to know what the connection is between human rights and international trade. Obviously, those connections are very tight. When the member opposite was asking my colleague earlier if he could name one trade agreement where human rights have been improved by an international trade agreement, I would argue that every trade agreement improves human rights, in every country where they have had them. If we believe that a human right is the chance to have opportunity that is free from coercion—and investment agreements and social agreements are part of that—obviously it improves the conditions in every country when we have these agreements in place.

Going back to this specific agreement, we are committed to improving access to foreign markets for Canadian business. We want to support opportunities for increased economic growth and creation of new opportunities for Canadians and Canadian companies. Canada's exporters, investors, and service providers are calling on us to help open doors for them internationally. That is why we believe in, and are pursuing, an ambitious pro-trade agenda.

The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement is part of our plan to help Canadians compete and succeed in a global economy. The agreement is a comprehensive trade deal that will provide our companies with a secure predictable framework for doing business in the Honduran market. It will also enable Canadian businesses to compete on a level playing field with key competitors from the United States and the European Union. These countries are already benefiting from free trade agreements that they have with Honduras, and we believe it is critical to keep pace with these competitors.

• (1520)

I would like to talk about some of the benefits that this agreement would bring to current and potential Canadian investors in Honduras. Foreign investment is a critical component of today's modern and global economy. It creates jobs, facilitates the transfer of knowledge, and increases production efficiencies through economies of scale in the host economy. Foreign investment also links our companies to global value chains and to new economic opportunities, which in turn enhances their competitiveness and increases the flow of goods and services between Canada and its trading partners.

At the end of 2012, Canadian direct investment abroad reached an all-time high of \$712 billion. That is almost \$1 trillion. Foreign direct investment into Canada stood at about \$634 billion. Those are significant numbers.

This comprehensive Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would include high standard investment provisions, which are designed to protect bilateral investment through legally binding obligations. I talked a bit earlier about the investment agreements that are part of these deals and that go toward creating and building institutional strength in many countries so that parallel human rights develop as well. These investment obligations would incorporate several key principles, including things like minimum standards for non-discriminatory treatment, protection against expropriation without compensation, and the free transfer of funds. This dynamic would help to foster an investment relationship between our two countries and pave the way for an increased flow of investment for the years ahead.

Through the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement, investors would also have access to a transparent, impartial, and binding dispute settlement mechanism. It is important to stress that while its agreement would ensure that investors and their investments are protected, it would not prevent either Canada or Honduras from regulating in the public interest, including with respect to health, safety, and the environment.

Government Orders

Investment provisions of the free trade agreement would also include an article on corporate social responsibility. This is something that the opposition often brings up. It has been included in this agreement. It recognizes that both Canada and Honduras expect and encourage companies to observe internationally recognized standards of responsible business conduct. Of course, this would include Canadian companies operating in Honduras.

Overall, this agreement would enhance investment opportunities for Canadian investors in Honduras and make sure that Canadian companies are treated on a level playing field, as I mentioned earlier, with our American and European counterparts.

In addition to the benefits for investors, this free trade agreement would provide Canadian companies with better access to government procurement opportunities in Honduras. Our Conservative government has been at the forefront of efforts to expand and secure access to foreign government procurement markets. Through the negotiation of these types of agreements and obligations, our government is working hard to enable Canadian businesses to take advantage of the opportunities that are presented in these markets through these agreements.

Increasing access, competition, and fairness in government procurement would also support our own domestic interests in obtaining best value in government procurement for Canadian taxpayers. Most of our free trade agreements from NAFTA—Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Panama—have obligations on government purchasing.

I understand that my time is running down, so I would like to talk about how the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would guarantee secure access for Canadian suppliers through these types of procurement opportunities, reducing the risk of doing business in the region. Moreover, it would ensure that Canadian suppliers can compete on the same basis as their main competitors in the American and European businesses that I have referred to, which already benefit from the free trade agreements that they have with Honduras.

Let us turn for a minute to how this agreement would benefit Canadian service providers. Professional telecommunications and financial services are already exported to Honduras. The free trade agreement would provide secure, predictable, and equitable treatment for Canadian service providers exporting their services to Honduras. The Canada-Honduras fair trade agreement would provide opportunities for Canadian service providers beyond Honduras' existing World Trade Organization's general agreement on trades and services commitments in the sectors that export interests to Canada, such as natural resources, professional services, and information and communication.

In conclusion, taken together, the provisions of the free trade agreement on trade and services would level the playing field for Canadian service suppliers with their American and European counterparts. As members can see, this is a high-quality agreement, with the potential to benefit Canadian investors and service providers. However, they would only be able to seize these opportunities if we ratify this agreement.

I urge all hon. members in the House to support the timely implementation of the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement.

• (1525)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member, who was one of the key members going around the country basically saying that if we blow up the Canadian Wheat Board look at all the choices we will have. The Canadian Wheat Board was all about trade, and what do we have now? We have a disaster in terms of getting our product to market.

Trade agreements are great and wonderful, but if we do not have a government that is willing to force the transportation infrastructure to move that product to market, it does not make much difference. On the wheat side, we have already lost a market to Japan. We know that a grain company is pulling out of a market in Algeria because farmers have the product but there is no way to get it to the marketplace.

On the Honduran trade agreement, what is the member going to do to assure us that in accompanying the agreement, the government would be willing to act and respond to ensure that the transportation infrastructure is in place to move our product?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I am a bit surprised to again hear the member opposite being so negative about trade. That fits in with the 13 years that the Liberals spent in power and only three trade agreements came into place.

I do not know if he understands about the coercive trade element that was involved with the Canadian Wheat Board. I think he does understand because it was an important issue for him. I was one of those who produced our grain. For many years we sat with the majority of our grain in our bins because it was unable to move it across the Prairies or unable to even sell it and market it. While he was here, there were many of us who were having to survive on about 50% of the income that we had in our bins.

If he is talking—

Hon. Wayne Easter: It is the same this year.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker: He is heckling me from across the way because he does not like to hear this, but the reality is that the product is going to move off the Prairies. We are working with the railways and the grain companies. We are going to be successful in moving farmers' products off the Prairies. They will, and they are, having a good year.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do agree with the member for Malpeque with respect to developing infrastructure to help our exporters get their products to market.

I also understand what the prairie farmers are going through. They have a bumper crop of wheat, and yet they are unable to get it to market because of the government's inaction to get the railroads working for the farmers.

We have another issue. The port of Vancouver is on the verge of being shut down. That dispute has been simmering for the last four or five years. There have been a number of issues. I have pointed to those issues in this House in the last six months. This morning there was a strike notice and a mediator is being appointed today. That should have been done a long time ago, so that we are not on the verge of having a major port shut down.

Government Orders

My question to the member across is this. How can he expect exporters to get their products to market when the government is unwilling to help our exporters get the products to market?

• (1530)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, please let us not pretend that the New Democrats are friendly toward trade because they are not. They stand up and criticize us, yet they do not even want this agreement. There would not be any product to take to market if they had their way. When they talk about these agreements as job destroying, saying they would destroy the very existence of this nation, obviously they have no interest. They do not even want to see these things go offshore.

We are working with the industry across western Canada, the railways, the grain companies, and the farm groups. The Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Transport are working with them, and we will get that product off of the Prairies.

I also want to point out that in terms of agricultural products, this agreement includes a number of things, such as pork, maple syrup, agriculture, agri-food products, wood, and pulp and paper products. The opposition members stand against moving Canadian products from those areas to Honduras. They do not want this agreement in place. There are other things, the aerospace industry, information and communications, fish and seafood, chemical products, plastic products and so forth. The New Democrats opposite stand opposed to our agreement with Honduras and the benefits that it would provide to Canadian companies.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will respond to the parliamentary secretary's question with regard to whether the NDP is for trade.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

I am honoured to speak to Bill C-20, the free trade agreement with Honduras. Let me talk about how we got here today. This bill has been under time allocation. For Canadians who are watching, time allocation is when the Conservatives shut down a debate. They do not want to debate the bill. They do not want Canadians to find out what it is exactly they are trying to rush through. We have seen this over and over. In fact, they have moved time allocation motions 53 times in this Parliament. Not only that, they have had closure on six debates.

I am lucky to have the opportunity to speak in the House, but there are many other members who are not going to get the opportunity to speak about this bill that is being rushed through the House of Commons. What is the rush? Are Conservatives trying to hide something from Canadians?

We saw the shenanigans this morning in regard to the unfair elections act. The Chief Electoral Officer spoke at committee, and we had time allocation motions here in the House. These are shenanigans by the government, which is trying to hide the real facts from Canadians. I will talk about some of those.

The parliamentary secretary talked about why we are against trade with Honduras. Before I get to that, what are the principles? What should we be looking at when we look at trade agreements with

other countries? There are a number of things we need to address to decide which countries we should have trade agreements with.

Trade is a reality. We are a trading nation, and Canadians are very competitive. We can sell our products to other countries. I am very proud that Canadians have products other countries want.

There are three fundamental criteria to assess trade agreements. First, does our partner respect democracy, human rights, adequate environmental protection, labour standards, and Canadian values? If these are not being met, is the partner willing to meet some of these requirements?

Second, is the proposed partner's economy of significant and strategic value to Canada, and are the terms of the proposed agreement satisfactory?

Let us talk about how democratic Honduras is. Let us talk about its human rights. All Canadians know the history of Honduras. In the last 15 or 20 years, I have known the history of Honduras. It is undemocratic and corrupt. In 2009, a democratically elected president was overthrown in a coup, and condemnation was worldwide.

Elections were held, and those elections were fraudulent. They were not fair. Guess who condemned those elections? It was the European Union, the United States, and many countries around the world. What does Canada do? We want to enter into a trade agreement with a corrupt dictator of a country that is known as the capital of Central America for drug laundering and so on. That is not the type of country we want to enter into free trade agreements with.

Of course we want to trade. We should be looking at trade agreements with countries that are strategic to Canadian products and where we can increase trade with those countries. Let us take a look at those countries. Let us look at Japan. Why do we not have a trade agreement with Japan? We have been negotiating with Japan for a number of years.

• (1535)

In fact, we started trade agreement negotiations with South Korea before the United States did. Guess what? The United States already has a trade agreement with South Korea.

Our pig and beef farmers are losing billions of dollars every year because the Conservative government has not put a priority on trade agreements that would be beneficial to Canadian producers.

We should be negotiating trade agreements with emerging countries, such as India, Brazil, and South Africa. These countries have populations that need the products we have here. Yet the Conservative government is negotiating a trade agreement with a dictatorship and a corrupt government.

Government Orders

We have \$38 million in exports to Honduras right now, which is not very much. The Conservative government wants to say that it has trade agreements with 15 countries. Well, if we add up the trade with all the little countries like Honduras and Liechtenstein, it will not add up to even one agreement with one of the emerging countries or Japan or South Korea. Those are the countries we should be pursuing.

Let us talk about the Conservative government's trade record.

Eight years ago, when the Conservatives came into government, we had a trade current account surplus of \$18 billion. What is it today after eight years? We have a deficit of \$62 billion. That is a swing of \$80 billion, which is roughly about \$10 billion a year. Under the current government, we have a trade deficit.

There is also a merchandise deficit. Merchandise is value-added goods that we export. Under the Conservative government, we have had 23 straight months of a merchandise trade deficit, and it is growing.

For us to provide good jobs, we need to export goods we add value to. They are secondary goods. However, most of the products we export are either not processed at all or are barely processed. That is the Conservatives government's record.

How do we improve on that? We improve on it by getting our product to markets. Under the current government, we have seen what is happening in the Prairies. The wheat is rotting in the fields under the Conservative government. It has been unable to convince the railroad companies to get the product out to the ports.

Once it gets to the ports, guess what is happening? At the port in Vancouver, there has been a simmering labour dispute for the last four or five years. I have spoken in this House to ask the government to address the situation before it gets to a point where we have a shutdown. Guess what? The deadline for a strike at the major port of Vancouver was this morning at 12 o'clock Pacific Time.

What has the Conservative government been doing for the last four years, or even the last six months? It has been sitting on its hands. The Conservatives could have appointed a mediator six months ago. When was a mediator appointed? It was this morning. Talks are ongoing and hopefully things will be resolved, but it is under the Conservative government that we are on the verge of having a major port shut down.

To support our exporters, we need to build infrastructure, ensure that our ports are freely functioning, ensure that our traders are supported, and ensure that we have consulate and trade services overseas so that we can identify buyers for our products. Those are the kinds of things the Conservative government needs to do.

The current Conservative government has failed our exporters.

• (1540)

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard some optimism in my colleague's remarks, because he was urging the government to get moving on its negotiations with Japan and South Korea. I infer from his comments that the NDP caucus has already agreed to get behind these two agreements. They may be the first agreements in the history of that party it will get behind to help the one in five

Canadian jobs that are attributable to trade. We will try to grow that pie.

I have two questions I would like the member to address. The trade critic of that party referenced the elections as being unfair. The most recent elections in Honduras were monitored, and the international community has been supportive and has called the results full and fair. Could the member tell me where his support is for that statement?

Why is my colleague not in favour of helping to increase the GDP of a country in our hemisphere that has a terribly low per capita GDP? Increased trade globally would actually help the people of that country.

I would like him to comment on those two issues: his reference to the election results and the overall question of trade raising people out of poverty.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, New Democrats will support a good trade deal, a trade deal that would help our exporters and help us get our products to market.

We refuse to support a trade deal with a country that has a poor human rights record. I do not have to let Canadians know how democratic Honduras is. We know the history of Honduras. We know what has been happening there. There has been wide condemnation of Honduras' human rights record and its ability to hold fair elections. That is widely documented. I would ask the parliamentary secretary to Google it and find out for himself.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I love the fact that the member pointed out that when the Conservatives inherited the government from Paul Martin, there was indeed a substantial trade surplus. Somehow they have converted that into a trade deficit. That means tens of thousands of lost opportunities in terms of good, solid jobs.

Am I to understand that the NDP will be voting against this bill? We recognize the value of trade. My colleague talked a great deal about the countries the NDP recognizes as worthy of having trade agreements with. Am I to draw the conclusion that the NDP will be voting against Bill C-20? It might have been referred to earlier. It is quite possible that I missed that point, but I would like clarification on that issue.

• (1545)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, under the Conservative government, we have seen our trade deficit grow. I agree with the member that we have a large trade deficit, and the government is not taking steps to address it.

I have given two examples already. One is that the wheat is not being moved out of the Prairies. It is fine and dandy to sign these free trade agreements, but if we cannot get our products to markets, we are not going to be able to sell in those markets. We have seen what has been happening at the port of Vancouver.

The government needs to take action and support our exporters to get their products to their markets. Unfortunately, the Conservatives are not doing that.

Government Orders

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We have time for a quick question and answer. The hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville.

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will get straight to my question. The Conservative member said that there were a lot of poor people in Honduras and that this agreement would help them. However, we know that there is a huge disparity between the rich and the poor. My concern is that this agreement will make the rich richer and the poor poorer. The government has not implemented any measures to prevent that from happening. I would like to hear my colleague comment on that.

[English]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, that is the twisted logic of the Conservative government on how this trade agreement would help the poor.

The government is corrupt. In a corrupt country, there is no trickle-down effect. Everything is absorbed at the top. The poor will remain poor in Honduras unless there is less corruption and an honourable government. That is not the case.

The government could have used some of its weight to ensure that labour rights, human rights, and environmental rights were honoured in Honduras. Unfortunately, the government has failed to do that.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak right after my colleague from Surrey North and after my many official opposition colleagues who made very relevant speeches, the first being the NDP's international trade critic, the member for Vancouver Kingsway.

I want to get off to a good start by quoting the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 18, verses 15 to 17:

If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.

But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'

If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Despite all of our efforts and all the times we have reached out, the government has shamefully imposed time allocation for the 52nd and 53rd time, in front of millions of witnesses, the millions of Canadian we proudly represent with dignity here in the House of Commons.

Despite the fact that I always try to treat government members like my sisters and brothers, the Conservatives have repeatedly spit in our faces. That is what they always do. Democracy has been denied from the outset. Now, we are studying a bill that, if passed, will be another source of shame for the people of this country. This is very serious.

Before thinking about my speech and delivering it here in the House, I took the time to listen to what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade had to say. I also listened to the entire speech given by my esteemed colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway, who is the NDP's international trade critic.

To begin, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade tried to create a smokescreen by extolling the virtues of the future free trade agreement between Canada and Europe. He did not disclose a single word of it, though. We are still in the dark about this free trade agreement, which we may support. The government is completely refusing to co-operate on that front.

As the member for Vancouver Kingsway said so well, other than the bill that was introduced in the House of Commons, we know nothing about the impact this agreement will have. The real problem goes beyond the government's claims that it wants to create jobs and bolster the Canadian and Honduran economies. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and the entire Conservative government—with active, enthusiastic support from the Liberals—are defending the indefensible. If this agreement goes into effect, it will go against the spirit of key international human rights treaties. That is unspeakable, not to mention completely immoral. Beyond the so-called economic arguments—which are more like wishful thinking, astrology or some other pseudo-science—there is no argument as convincing as denouncing the fundamental immorality of the bill introduced in the House.

Now I would like to focus on my Liberal colleagues. I was shocked to hear the speech from the hon. member for Toronto Centre. The Liberals are advocating a position that is very far removed from the position of Lester B. Pearson's government.

● (1550)

The Liberals' philosophy is some 500 years behind, stuck in a time of slavery and exploitation of the colonies and entire populations, the world over.

It is not so surprising to see the Liberals getting on board with the Conservatives. It has been said time and again in the House: there are major problems in Honduras. Organized crime is widespread. Democracy was wiped out in 2009, and there is no indication or meaningful evidence that this democracy is really vibrant or beneficial to the people of Honduras.

It is very easy to understand why this government is defending tooth and nail the bill we are considering and debating in the House for such a horribly limited amount of time. We know that the Conservatives have a penchant for fraudulent ways. They were caught using an in and out scheme and allowing their data bank to be used to voluntarily lead thousands of voters astray to false polling stations during past elections.

It is incredible that I am standing here in the House right now denouncing things that no party should even imagine or consider doing.

Currently, the party in power is denying its responsibility, denying reality and, in fact, is continuing along its merry way as though nothing happened. It even suggests that there were administrative issues at play when we talk about the in and out scheme. So it comes as no surprise that it is defending Bill C-20, a bill that might just be a blight on Canada's reputation.

I hope that my Conservative and Liberal colleagues will listen to reason and change their positions on this.

Government Orders

The situation has been described at length, but I want to go over it again. It is chilling to think about the murder rate and the number of people who live in fear in that country. In fact, it is not complicated; the entire population of Honduras lives in fear daily, except of course a very limited group of people that must represent, at best, a few thousand people. In fact, it is probably just a few hundred people only. They live in comfort, safety and luxury. In Honduras, a truly very small elite group enjoys this type of benefits.

How can they justify supporting a government that tolerates the reign of organized crime? Can any of my colleagues on the government or Liberal benches answer that? I have asked the question several times. Nobody has had the guts to give me a straight answer on that.

In closing, I would like to debunk an urban myth that the government has slyly, though crudely, tried to cultivate. It would have us believe the warped logic that if we support economic development, democracy will just materialize. That kind of logic is anything but divinely inspired. First of all, that is absolutely not the case, because there is no mention of the economy in this.

This urban legend belongs in the same category as the urban myth perpetuated all over social media and the Internet about how if you pass a car at night that does not have its headlights on, you should not flash your brights at it because it is part of a gang initiation ritual. Before I was elected, I had a little free time, and I researched that. I discovered that no law enforcement organization in North America had ever recorded a crime related to that kind of thing.

•(1555)

The government is making things up and trying to mislead the Canadian public, just like it does with other issues. Enough is enough.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as far as I know, Canada is a respectable country.

If Canada signs free trade agreements with countries that violate rights and commit acts of violence against their own citizens, does this not give other perhaps less respectable countries permission to do the same thing? Does this not also tarnish Canada's reputation?

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Hochelaga raises an excellent question.

A little earlier in the House, I had the privilege of talking about one of the many things I am reading right now, an essay on economics by the renowned economist Esther Duflo, who is one of President Obama's advisors in the United States. I think she still is. Her essay is entitled "Repenser la pauvreté" or "Rethinking Poverty".

The economic framework and the framework of democratic institutions are crucial factors when we talk about developing countries, poor countries and extreme poverty.

One thing that all economics experts can agree on is that it is impossible for a country to provide economic security and favourable conditions for economic development if it does not make people feel secure and if there is no sound government that guarantees individual rights.

•(1600)

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. He talked a lot about morality, particularly at the beginning of his speech.

I get a feeling that the fundamental disagreement we have with the government has to do with how we look at free trade agreements. Indeed, the government looks at them only from a market standpoint, which is completely amoral. I did not say "immoral", but rather "amoral". That is very important. We examine these agreements from a moral standpoint.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I continue to appreciate the nuanced thinking of my colleague from Louis-Hébert, with whom I have worked for a long time, nine years to be exact. We went into politics in 2005.

I find it very interesting that there has been no reaction to my speech from the government or even the Liberals. That probably says a lot about their inability to credibly maintain their position and their embarrassment at being a party to what the House will unfortunately be asked to do, which is pass this free trade agreement bill.

Under what conditions and how can we blot out this stain on Canada's reputation? I do not know what to answer.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for his speech.

This government has often brought in free trade agreements. Some have been beneficial for Canada, Quebec, the other provinces and the signatory countries.

However, in other cases, such as the Colombia agreement—that is the most recent example I can think of—there have been reprisals against journalists, arbitrary imprisonments and environmental and labour rights violations. I believe that we will see the same pattern with the Honduras free trade agreement.

Should the government not be setting an example when ratifying free trade agreements? Should it not be showing the world and the country concerned that an economic agreement could be concluded, but that first and foremost the country must respect fundamental rights? That is what the member mentioned in his speech. It seems to me that we would be setting an example before entering into a free trade agreement.

The Conservatives are doing the exact opposite. They are telling us that they will sign the agreement and then convince them to improve their human rights record.

Does my colleague have any examples where such agreements have been signed with countries such as Colombia and the situation has improved? I do not believe so, and I would like to hear what he has to say about that.

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I would really like to thank the member for Richmond—Arthabaska for his remarks and his question. I found no such examples. Perhaps my research was not extensive enough.

Government Orders

I would like to raise another issue about another recent debate. I am talking about the agreement with Panama, a country where, despite the government's claim that it is fighting tax evasion, tax fraud shores up a government that is still too tolerant of tax evasion and is still a tax haven in the eyes of authorities such as the International Monetary Fund.

It is absolutely unbelievable. I completely agree with my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): 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 Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, The Budget; the hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, Industry.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale.

• (1605)

[*English*]

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Don Valley West.

It is my pleasure this afternoon to highlight how the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would fit with Canada's strategy for engagement in the Americas.

Canada's prosperity requires expansion beyond our borders into new markets for economic opportunities that serve to grow Canada's exports and investments. As members will recall, the Prime Minister announced the Americas as a foreign policy priority in 2007, with a vision of a more prosperous, secure, and democratic hemisphere. Seven years on, our whole-of-government engagement in the hemisphere has never been stronger.

There are three goals in the Americas strategy. The first is to increase Canadian and hemispheric economic opportunity. The second is to address insecurity and advance freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law through capacity-building. The third is to build a stable foundation for Canada's engagement and increased influence in the hemisphere.

Stronger economic ties are becoming increasingly important with uncertainty in the global economy. Our government understands the importance of trade to our economy. It represents one out of every five jobs in Canada and accounts for 64% of our country's annual income.

Increased engagement through trade and commercial economic ties is one of the best ways we can support positive change and sustainable economic growth in the Americas.

Our Conservative government's efforts to increase mutual economic opportunity centre on creating the conditions for a dynamic, transparent, and rules-based commercial and investment environment. In particular, advancing free trade in the Americas opens new doors of opportunity for Canadian and Honduran companies and increases economic benefits for all, including more jobs and prosperity.

Canada and Honduras have enjoyed a very positive relationship since we first established diplomatic relations in 1961. Given our demonstrated commitment to democratic development, our important development assistance program—which is the biggest development program we operate in Central America—and our growing trade and investment linkages, Canada continues to be a constructive partner for Honduras.

Canada, represented by the former minister of the environment, the member for Thornhill, played a leading role in efforts to reach a peaceful, negotiated solution to the political crisis sparked by the coup d'état in Honduras in June 2009.

On the economic front, bilateral merchandise trade between Canada and Honduras reached \$257 million in 2012, growing 9% over the previous year. Merchandise exports to Honduras were a modest \$38 million in 2012, while imports from Honduras were \$218 million. Undoubtedly, our new agreement will allow us to increase our exports substantially in a range of industry sectors.

With respect to capital, Canadian direct foreign investment is most prominent in Honduras in the garment, manufacturing, and mining industries. Tourism is a growing industry in Honduras, and Canadians are a significant factor. From January to October of last year, 25,000 Canadians visited Honduras, with an additional 37,000 Canadians entering the country by cruise ships over that same period.

As with any trade agreement, various industries in each province would benefit through increased exports and the new jobs that would be created.

The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would benefit exporters from my home province of British Columbia through the elimination of Honduran tariffs in sectors of export interest, such as textiles, which currently face up to 15% tariffs; industrial machinery, also facing tariffs of up to 15%; and construction equipment, which would also see the elimination of current tariffs, which range up to 15%. Additionally, B.C.'s forestry sector stands to benefit with the elimination of tariffs, as wood and pulp and paper products currently face tariffs as high as 15%.

Seven of Canada's concluded free trade agreements are with countries in the Americas: Mexico, through NAFTA; Chile; Costa Rica; Peru; Colombia; Panama; and, of course, Honduras.

• (1610)

Our government recognizes the need to make companies aware of the advantages and opportunities that they create to maximize the mutual benefits flowing from these agreements. Our strategic push to liberalize trade with the Americas is working. We are removing barriers and facilitating two-way commerce.

Government Orders

The Americas offer great potential. Total trade between countries in the Americas and Canada, which was at \$56 billion in 2012, has increased by 32% since 2007, and Canadian direct investment in the region, at \$168 billion in 2012, has increased by 58% since 2007.

In order to continue to promote mutual economic opportunity, our government's strategy for engagement in the Americas focuses on intensifying trade promotion and relationship-building efforts to ensure that the Canadian private sector is taking full advantage of trade and economic agreements, as well as on building the capacity of our trading partners to capitalize on the benefits of free trade with Canada. The Canada-Americas trade-related technical assistance program, for example, serves to assist Canada's trade partners in Latin America and the Caribbean region to maximize the opportunities and benefits of increased trade and investment afforded them through their free trade agreements with Canada.

In line with our strategy, our Conservative government is committed to a strong economic partnership with Honduras that would contribute to enhanced prosperity and sustainable economic growth in both countries. For example, there are currently a number of development projects under way in Honduras which aim to improve food security, such as the Special Programme for Food Security.

The free trade agreement and its parallel agreements on labour and environmental co-operation would promote responsible commercial exchange while building a winning advantage for our companies, in particular in areas where Canada has experience an expertise, such as in natural resource management.

However, it is important to recall that prosperity and security are mutually reinforcing. To enable and protect Canadian trade and commercial investments, the security situation in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean must be taken into consideration, and it has rightly been made a focus in our strategy for engagement in the Americas. Recognizing the challenges to overcome for peace and prosperity in the region, Canada has committed over \$70 million in security assistance to Central America since 2008, with \$25 million announced in 2012 by the Prime Minister for the Canadian initiative for security in Central America. Through such investments, we are helping to strengthen security and institutions that safeguard freedom, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Canada also works closely with the Central American integration system to improve donor coordination and security co-operation in Central America.

Honduras is also a country of focus for Canadian development programming, through which we are stimulating sustainable economic growth, increasing food security, and securing the future of children and youth. The Building Effective Justice Systems project, for example, contributes to the strengthening of the criminal justice system through training in crime scene examination, investigation, and oral trial techniques.

In a region where relationships are fundamental to success, long-term and multi-faceted engagement is a vital part of Canada's strategy for engagement in the Americas. Competition for market share is on the rise, and Canada must demonstrate that it is a serious and committed partner. The engagement of the Prime Minister, ministers, and Conservative members has been central to this effort.

While sustaining high-level engagement is essential, our government continues to build and strengthen relationships across the private sector, government, academia, civil society, and among individuals. Through our strong bilateral relationships and the increasing people-to-people networks generated through educational exchanges, increased tourism, and business links, our ties with Honduras are growing stronger every day, and we are seeing an increase in the opportunities for both countries.

The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement and the parallel labour and environmental co-operation agreements are key components to advance in Honduras the goals of Canada's strategy for engagement in the Americas. I ask all hon. members for their support.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned tourism several times. That is an interesting subject. In Canada, tourism is slowing down and has been for years. Canada was once a great global tourism destination. Now it seems like nothing is happening and there is hardly any promotion of Canadian tourism to people in other countries.

I would like to know where people are going. Whenever people talk about tourism, the destinations are tax havens and warmer countries. Why not get people to come to Canada to visit our country? We have so many tourist attractions. Can my colleague comment on this? We are definitely bringing up the rear.

[*English*]

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question and comments. I do hope he is not trying to discourage Canadians from finding a warmer climate in which to spend some time during the winter.

However, he asks about our initiatives to increase tourism to Canada, and I would point out that we are increasing tourism to Canada. Looking at the opportunities we have created, for example, for Asian tourists to come to our beautiful country, we see that we have provided visa-free access to the Taiwanese in recent years. More recently, we have seen an increase in the number of Chinese tourists coming to Canada; as many as 400,000 last year, I am told. From people I have spoken with, I hear that when they go to Niagara Falls or other iconic destinations in Canada they see a large number of tourists from around the world, but particularly from Asia, where we have focused heavily on promoting Canada's opportunity for tourism.

Yes, Canadians want to spend some time in warmer climates, perhaps during the winter, but we are also making ourselves very inviting to the rest of the world.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we look at the trade agreement and see it as a positive. I want to get to the bigger picture in terms of trade in general.

Government Orders

When the Conservatives first took office, they inherited a significant, sizable trade surplus, which assisted in terms of literally tens of thousands of jobs as a direct result of that trade surplus. It did not take the Conservatives long to turn a surplus into a multi-billion-dollar trade deficit.

The question I have for the member is this. Does the Conservative government, today, have any plans as to when we can expect Canada to be on the plus side once again, in terms of a trade surplus as opposed to a trade deficit? Can the member indicate what year Canadians can anticipate that a Conservative government would be able to ensure we have a trade surplus?

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Speaker, certainly the member does not expect me to predict the future. However, he does bring to mind the Liberal record.

It was not long ago that the Liberals were in power for 13 long years, as many people describe it. We might ask ourselves how many trade agreements they accomplished during those 13 years. The answer is three. That is not much to have accomplished during that long period of government.

Yet here we are, a Conservative government since 2006, and we have concluded agreements with 37 countries while, at the same time, improving the trade relations we have with the three that the Liberals were able to secure.

When the member opposite tries to attack our government on our trading relationship, it is a bit rich for him to go down that path, considering his own record of engagement in that party.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale for his excellent presentation. From a tourism perspective, there is not a nicer part of the country to visit.

It is with great pleasure that I rise today in this place to speak to the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement. In particular, I would like to say a few words about the issue of corporate social responsibility and how it relates to this agreement.

Corporate social responsibility can be defined as the voluntary activities undertaken by a company to operate in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner. It is also increasingly referred to as responsible business practices. It covers a broad range of activities, including environmental protection, human rights, labour relations, corporate governance, transparency, community relations, peace and security, and anti-corruption measures.

Our government recognizes the importance of corporate social responsibility in a globally competitive, well-regarded extractive sector. Our government encourages and expects Canadian companies working internationally to respect all applicable laws and international standards, to operate transparently and in consultation with host governments and local communities, and to develop and implement corporate social responsibility best practices.

Canada has a long-standing commitment to promoting and encouraging responsible business practices by Canadian companies operating overseas. For instance, Canada has been a key driver and supporter of the numerous other important international instruments,

including the International Finance Corporation's *Performance Standards on Social and Environmental Sustainability*, the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative, the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, and most recently, the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

This clearly demonstrates that this government's commitment to international corporate social responsibility standards is a fundamental ongoing priority. Our government has turned this commitment into concrete action in a number of ways, including by integrating robust corporate social responsibility provisions into many bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements, of which the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement is no exception.

Another concrete example is Canada's corporate social responsibility strategy for the international extractive sector, also known as building the Canadian advantage. The strategy was announced in March 2009 after extensive cross-country consultations with a number of key stakeholders. It has proven to be a strong framework by which our government encourages and promotes responsibility, responsible business practices by Canadian companies working internationally in the extractive sector.

Our support for the international corporate social responsibility guidelines in principle extends this reach to all business sectors operating anywhere in the world. Therefore, our government encourages and expects Canadian companies working internationally to, one, respect all applicable laws and international standards, including those that pertain to human rights and environment, and two, operate transparently and in consultation with host governments and local communities.

I want to be clear. The vast majority of Canadian companies conduct their operations in line with international standards for responsible business conduct. This is a key reason why Canadian companies are highly regarded and respected around the globe. It is also one of the reasons why Canada is a leader in the global extraction sector.

I wish to comment briefly on Canada's approach, which emphasizes voluntary activities as opposed to regulations, obligatory actions, and punitive measures. Canada has worked hard in support of many corporate social responsibility guidelines, as we understand their value to Canadian companies operating abroad. In fact, they often provide valuable guidance, which allows our companies to succeed. This is reinforced by actions of Canadian companies. There has been a substantial transformation on the part of the private sector with respect to corporate social responsibility.

• (1620)

Today, Canadian companies operating abroad recognize that corporate social responsibility and responsible business practices are fundamentally important to their ultimate success and their bottom line, including shareholder value. They recognize that a commitment to responsible business practice is a commitment to their own success. In a sense, corporate social responsibility has been mainstreamed into the management and operational structure of Canadian companies.

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Last June, the Prime Minister announced that our government will be establishing new mandatory reporting standards for Canadian extractive companies, with a view to enhancing transparency on the payments they make to governments. This effort, which will also help to ensure that citizens in resource-rich countries around the world are better informed and benefit from the natural resources in their country, builds on Canada's key role as a supporting country of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. These initiatives on transparency highlight our government's commitment to working with our trading partners to pursue policies that support a responsible and sustainable investment environment in the best interests of host communities and businesses.

Responsible business conduct reinforces the positive effects that trade and investment can have on human rights, labour standards, the environment, and competitiveness. At the same time, it has a significant positive effect on the communities in which the businesses operate. The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement includes provisions on corporate social responsibility because our government believes that liberalized, rules-based trade and social and environmental responsibility go hand in hand.

The parallel agreements on labour co-operation and environmental co-operation ensure that increased business between our two nations does not come at the expense of our social and environmental responsibilities. Activities to promote responsible business practices can also be undertaken in the form of trade-related co-operation. Provisions in these agreements encourage both governments to promote voluntary principles of responsible business conduct with their business communities. Not only do these agreements advance our government's efforts to promote corporate social responsibility; they also provide an opportunity to engage partners to increase its promotion.

Both Canada and Honduras have agreed to support positive corporate social responsibility practices and to remind companies of the importance of incorporating corporate social responsibility standards in their internal practices. A fundamentally important aspect of this bilateral approach is that it helps level the playing field for Canadian investors when they invest in Honduras, by encouraging corporate social responsibility principles amongst all investors. At its core, responsible business practices incorporate social, economic, and environmental concerns into the daily operations of firms to benefit industry and society, with particular consideration for the community in which they are operating. Given that Canada and Honduras have a significant investment relationship, it was critical to include corporate social responsibility in these important agreements.

Our government has shown its commitment to promoting corporate social responsibility and responsible business practices internationally and is pleased to work with trade partners to broaden this commitment. The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement recognizes this and is an important mechanism to create jobs, opportunities, and prosperity for Canadians in a socially and environmentally responsible manner.

For these reasons, I ask all hon. members for their support of this very important agreement.

● (1625)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully as the hon. member spoke a lot about corporate social responsibility and how important that is to Canadians. However, I think Canadians are also expecting government democratic responsibility.

Honduras is an undemocratic country, with one of the worst human rights records in the world. It has the highest murder rate of journalists on the planet. It is a major cocaine trafficking centre. It tolerates environmentally destructive policies.

Honduras ranks 104th on Canada's list of trade partners and DFAIT itself acknowledges that this deal would provide only marginal benefits to Canadian exporters.

Honduras permits corporate actions that harm the environment, violating indigenous rights and the wishes of local populations, and permits a lot of paramilitary death squads to operate, intimidating citizens and committing violent acts against those who raise peaceful voices of dissent.

Canadians would not support a trade agreement with the previous government of Ukraine or North Korea or Iran. Why does the current government believe that Canadians would support an agreement with Honduras, which has an equally bad record of violating the democratic and human rights standards not only of Honduras but also of Canada and the world?

● (1630)

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, we are a pro-trade government. That is what we do. We believe in trade. We believe in jobs, job creation, and prosperity for all Canadians. In entering a agreement like this, employing some of the standards and priorities that I have just articulated, it is critical that we work with our partners to ensure that they carry those same values.

While the member certainly can promote an isolationist-type of environment, where we just stay at home, where we are anti-trade and do not participate in global markets, that is not the government's approach and not the one we on our side of the House will take in this agreement.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his emphasis on opportunity, job creation, growth, and trade.

I have had the opportunity to visit Honduras on a number of occasions and do dentistry in some of the remote parts of Honduras, seeing the kinds of efforts that the Honduran people make to increase the standard of living in their country. I certainly applaud all of those efforts.

As my colleague has a bit of time left, I wonder if he would outline some of the positive effects that increased investment and increased trade with Honduras would bring to the Honduran people, who are asking for this. If he could just give me a couple of examples, that would be great.

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Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, I have not been to Honduras, but I have had an opportunity to meet with some of those in the extractive sector, in the mining industry, who talk about social responsibility and an opportunity to give back to the communities where they work and employ local inhabitants. In doing so, they are not only growing those environments, those neighbourhoods, creating a more prosperous environment for people to live in within a more sustainable world, but also taking there the medical and dental practices lacking in those countries as an example, to help people in need where they do not have those skill sets available.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is a sad day. I have to wonder, when I hear the member talk about these principles and about corporate social responsibility.

What is the Government of Canada's social responsibility?

The member says that he is pro-trade. The Hells Angels are too.

Who were those negotiators from Honduras; who were those people we negotiated with? They were people responsible for murders and acts of violence, people who killed journalists and union activists.

I am not surprised to hear this sort of logic from the Conservatives. However, I think it is disgusting that the Liberal Party, including the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie, who ran in the leadership race to become prime minister and whom I consider to be a man of integrity, is okay with Canada signing this agreement with the most violent country in Latin America, where democracy is violated the most. That is what I am most sad about today.

[English]

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, what we are hearing clearly demonstrates the type of values the opposition members bring to the House, values that are anti-trade and close-minded, and which just do not allow for expansionist thinking and opportunity.

I do not know if the member was in the room when I presented my speech, but the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement includes provisions on corporate social responsibility. We are sharing those provisions and our responsibilities with our partners on the other side of this agreement.

Somewhere we have to start to build a bridge. I hear the member on some of the issues, but I do not believe that closing ourselves off, staying entirely in Canada, being anti-trade and anti-growth and anti-prosperity, is going to do what we need to do in the rest of the world. We need to expand global markets.

• (1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to speak to Bill C-20. Maybe I should start by commenting on the remarks of my colleague from the New Democratic Party, who confirms why the NDP members often scare business. It is a scary proposition if we stop to think about their attitudes toward trade. They can put up walls and prevent merchandise from coming into the country, but I give this advice to my New Democratic colleagues: they might want to open their minds to the facts of how important trade is to Canada.

It is estimated that up to 80% of economic activity or jobs in Canada are attributable to trade. Canada is a trading nation. In response the NDP members say, well, we are talking about trade between Canada and Honduras. I listened to their comments on Bill C-20. They say that Honduras is a bad country, a very bad country. I get that message. That is what they are saying. Do they know that there is currently over a quarter of a billion dollars of trade between our two countries? Are they suggesting that we should abandon that trade also? Are they suggesting that Canada should not trade with nations like Honduras, period?

We should be concerned about that. I can appreciate that in the history of our nation, the NDP has never voted in favour of a trade agreement. It has never done that. It does not seem to recognize that there is some value to trade. In representing their constituents, New Democrats need to realize that many of them have their jobs because of world trade. We should not fear trade, but recognize that there are opportunities for Canada to benefit from it.

Those are the questions I have posed to the government and New Democrats. Let us recognize the value of trade if we manage that file right.

I will get to the Honduras trade agreement specifically, but when we look at the overall trade balance, we see that when the Conservatives inherited government, there was a multi-billion trade surplus. Today we have a multi-billion trade deficit. What does that mean? Other than stating the fact that Conservatives have done a poor job on the trade file overall, it means that Canada has been deprived of tens of thousands of good, solid jobs. Do not underestimate the impact this has had on the middle class in Canada, because the government of the day has not done its homework.

In part we have to bring this right to the Office of the Prime Minister. One of the speakers talked about the government reaching 37 trade agreements. What he did not highlight is that the process for a number of those agreements began during a Liberal administration. It was Liberals that started them. What they failed to realize is yes, there is a difference in attitude in regard to—

• (1640)

Mr. Dan Harris: You guys failed and the Conservatives felt the impact.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I see there is a member standing on a point of order. Normally we do not recognize members on points of order unless, of course, they bring that point of order from the seat they normally occupy in the House.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the trade file is interesting, and I will give a good example of that.

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien decided that he would go to China to increase trade. What did he do? He brought stakeholders, including provincial government representatives, and I believe there were even premiers; all sorts of business executives; and labour organizations. There was a good cross-section of Canadians who went to China. I believe he even went to other Asian countries, but I am not 100% sure of that. At the end of the day, we saw hundreds of millions of dollars in trade going back and forth as a direct result of that trip.

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How does that compare to the current Prime Minister? First of all, it took the Conservatives quite a while to wake up to the reality that China is a significant country and has a lot to offer in terms of potential trade in the future. However, I believe that in 2009, possibly 2010, the Prime Minister went to China. What did he deliver? Well, I believe he came back with two panda bears, and he thought that was a great achievement. However, when I was part of the Manitoba legislature, the premier was able to get two panda bears.

It is all about way that one approaches trade. The government members stand in their place and say they have done well because they have another trade agreement. They say they have 30-plus trade agreements. Some may applaud, and yes it is good to see trade agreements. However, I think Canadians are concerned not just with having trade agreements, but with our addressing the whole trade file as well.

We must recognize that there are other countries in the world that we need to do a little more work on. I say this because the Conservatives have dropped the ball, turning a huge trade surplus into a huge trade deficit.

Let us talk about how the government manages to mess up trade. It is all about the current Prime Minister and the Conservative government's poor performance. It is about what is happening on the Prairies today. We have megapiles of grain throughout the Prairies. There is so much grain, it is not only in the bins but it also stored outside the bins in plastic. We have known about this for months. It is not something new. The government would have been aware of this back in September or October.

We have all of this grain in the Prairies, but then we look to the Pacific Ocean and we have empty ships there. There is a disconnect: that grain should be in the ships. As a direct result of this, Canada is losing millions of dollars worth of contracts because the Conservative government did not do its job.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Build a pipeline.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if we can get grain down a pipeline. However, we are talking about prairie grain farmers right now, and the government has dropped the ball.

We have people in the Prairies saying that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is one of the worst ministers ever.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: The truth hurts, Mr. Speaker.

We finally got the Minister of Transport to stand up today after a while.

Why does the government not amend Transport Canada legislation to protect our farmers and give them a service guarantee? This is something that the government can do. The Liberal Party has indicated that the potential amendments are already there. We know what they are. The government could act on these today. It is amazing, but with the co-operation of all political parties we could pass legislation awfully quickly.

The government needs to send a message to the prairie farmers that we care. However, the Conservatives have not been able to do that.

Therefore, when we talk about trade, we must think about the bigger picture of trade and what we need to do not only maintain it but also to improve and grow the markets and take responsibility for that.

● (1645)

The government has not been responsible on this file, overall. The government needs to be accountable for the bottom line figure.

Unlike the NDP, we understand the benefits of trade. We understand the concerns with regard to environmental issues and social issues. We are just as sensitive to those issues as any other political party inside the chamber, but that does not mean that we cannot continue to move forward.

The NDP critic asked about what was happening in Ukraine. He is referring to the fact that under the old Ukraine regime, there could be no trade agreement. Regimes come and go, but trade will continue on. We would like to think that we could have an impact. NDP logic would have trade banned with countries they do not deem worthy enough to trade with Canada. That would mean cancelling a lot of today's imports and exports.

We can do better. We want to see trade agreements that would benefit Canadians, first and foremost. As well, we want to see trade agreements that would improve the conditions in other countries around the world. Canada can benefit, if the government manages the file. One example is Honduras.

Pork is an important industry to the province of Manitoba. Manitoba has more pigs than it has people. We cannot consume all the pork, so we need export markets, and Honduras is one of those export markets. With this particular agreement, Manitoba would be able to export more pork to Honduras and thereby benefit. I have been out to the hog farms and to the Burns slaughter plant in Brandon. A lot of jobs have been created as a direct result of the pork industry in Manitoba. Our province has seen the economic benefit of that industry. Not only here in Canada but also around the world, consumers eat first-class, quality food because of this important industry in Manitoba.

I recognize the value of free trade agreements when both nations can benefit.

Last week in question period, I asked what the government is doing with respect to concerns relating to the pork industry and some of the feed being called into question in certain regions. To what degree is the government coming to the table to protect the integrity of that industry? Once again, the government is lacking.

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The government needs to take a more aggressive approach in addressing the needs of our communities. It needs to come to the table and help resolve problems where it can. Pork farmers not only in Manitoba but also in Quebec and other places are concerned about the integrity of the industry because of the feed that is being brought in. They want the government to take some action on that important file. We all have a vested interest in that file, especially when we are talking about the Honduras trade agreement before us today. It is very important.

• (1650)

Honduras has a population of roughly 8 million people. Some of its most notable exports are the production of minerals, coffee, tropical fruit, sugar cane and, recently, clothing to the international market. Its clothing industry is growing quite significantly.

Honduras is in a critical area of the world. It was back in 2001 when the negotiations really started about recognizing the need to have and work toward trade agreements with countries such as Honduras, which we are debating today, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. There is a need for Canada to do what it can in reaching out and improving the economic conditions of other countries. Canadians as a whole want us to do that.

We do not need to live in fear of free trade agreements. There will always be some shortcomings, and we need to be aware of them. I want to see our Canadian workforce on an equal playing field with other countries we compete with. It is frustrating to me and to many within the Liberal Party when we see distinct subsidies that would assist one country and potentially harm industries within our own country.

No one has complete ownership of that issue. We are all concerned. We all want to save the jobs we have. I, for one, understand and appreciate many of the different industries in my home province and I want them to grow. I referred to the pork industry. We have other industries that I take a great deal of pride in. The aerospace industry is one of them.

One industry where there is great potential for growth is tourism. It would be wonderful to see more people from Honduras coming to Canada, and Canadians ultimately visiting Honduras. We are seeing an overall increase in world travel. The spinoff benefits are phenomenal. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of jobs worldwide, and tens of thousands of them here.

I see that my time has virtually expired. As members can tell, we support, in principle, the passage of this particular bill. The Liberal Party does not fear free trade. It sees trade as very beneficial. If we recognize that Canada is so dependent on international trade, I suspect that there might be more support from all sides of the House. Canada needs trade, and we should be looking at countries where there is great potential.

I conclude on a very personal note. One country that I feel very passionate about is the Philippines. It is one of our greatest sources of immigration today. I would argue that we need to get beyond immigration and start looking at trade and what more we could do in trade and tourism.

There are many great countries around the world and we need to tap into them. If we do it right, Canadians and the middle class will

benefit, because it will generate tens of thousands of jobs, and improve the quality of life not only for Canadians but also for people around the world.

• (1655)

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to our friend from Winnipeg North.

First, I want to clarify the Liberal record on free trade. We need only think about the famous 1988 election when the Liberal Party fought tooth and nail against the free trade agreement. I know, we know, and I am sure the member will agree that the NDP will oppose free trade all the time, just because it is not in their nature to support free trade and all the benefits that go with it. They are very protectionist.

I wonder if the member could explain to me the Liberal flip-flop from the 1988 election, and why more free trade agreements were not signed during the 13 years of Liberal rule.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my Winnipeg friend from Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia.

I will start off by saying that I agree with the member in regard to the New Democrats. Sometimes a person does get frustrated, trying not to focus on how they come up with their ideas on free trade.

I would like to think that at the end of the day, the New Democratic members might support some free trade. There was some indication of that from a previous speaker. I believe Japan was one country they would support an agreement with. I have not really heard them talk about any other countries.

Having said that, I do recognize that there have been a wide variety of trade agreements. Some of them have been Conservative and some have been Liberal. Some that are signed off, for example, Honduras, the trade agreement we are talking about today, were initiated back in 2001. That is when the discussions actually began, under Jean Chrétien.

I could go over the years. The auto pact, probably one of the greatest trade agreements or arrangements made, was led by the Liberal Party back in the 1960s. It created hundreds of thousands of jobs. Both Canada and the United States benefited immensely.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest to the presentations on this particular bill.

What I find really puzzling is the official opposition is being faulted as supposedly being the only one raising concerns with the trade agreement with Honduras. Yet, I am informed that a report commissioned by Carleton University, written by such wild and crazy people as Derek Burney and Thomas d'Aquino, in consultation with Canadians, recommended that Ottawa should instead focus its attention on negotiations with major nations, where we are going to substantially benefit from.

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In the report was the suggestion that the Honduras agreement will, if passed, contribute exactly 71 minutes of trade for Canada. It really raises a question about all the time, energy, and taxpayers' money we are spending in negotiating a trade deal of this extent.

One of the previous members of the government who spoke raised the fact that there is a wonderful environmental side agreement to this trade deal. Frankly, there is not a wonderful side agreement. Continuously, the government has downgraded the environmental side agreements. The fact that it is a side agreement and is not included as a binding condition is enough. There is no permanent council of environment ministers. There is no full-time secretariat. There is no duty for effective environmental enforcement.

How does the member defend this? Does he believe that trade agreements should be even further downgraded since NAFTA?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, a great number of my comments were in regard to trade between Canada and the rest of the world overall. We recognize that there is a much bigger picture here, and I like to think I put a great deal of emphasis on that in my comments.

Nothing has changed. We in the Liberal Party believe in trade, and we believe that the government has not done a good job in terms of the overall numbers. I have emphasized that point. I emphasize that point a lot.

That said, it does not mean that we disregard a quarter of a billion dollars, that being Honduras. There is no shame in supporting a trade agreement. It does not mean we have to abandon social policy issues. We can be just as strong on social policy issues and still support a trade agreement.

I know the member is having a difficult time with this. If we follow her logic, it would mean we should not be trading at all with Honduras. Today, we do more than a quarter of a billion dollars in trade per year.

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I had a really hard time listening to my Liberal colleague's speech, and I think my NDP colleagues feel the same way.

I want to share some facts with the House. Honduras is widely considered to be the murder capital of the world, with a record 7,172 homicides in 2012. Twenty-three journalists were killed there in the past three years alone. Just 1% of crimes are investigated by police. This means that there are 7,172 homicides in a year and only 1% of these crimes are probably investigated by the police. Journalists live in constant fear.

I am pleased that we are not supporting this free trade agreement because it is not a good agreement. As a democratic country, Canada should not support a country that allows such things to go on within its borders. I am proud not to support this agreement. I would like to ask the member how he can morally and ethically support it.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would put the challenge to the member. If she genuinely believes exactly what she just said, then why does she support over a quarter of a billion dollars of trade

between these two countries today? Is that not a legitimate question to be putting to the NDP? I would like to hear any one of the New Democrats explain why they would allow trade to grow between these two countries naturally.

This is what I say, which scares a lot of people: Canada is a trading nation. At the end of the day, if the New Democrats want to continue along that line, that is fine, but let us hear them be straightforward and then say that they want to ban trade with those countries. However, they are not prepared to say that. Why is that? I suspect it is because what they are really trying to do is to come up with a justification for their behaviour inside the chamber on the trade file, because they have never stood in their place inside the House and voted for a free trade agreement. They might try to say otherwise, but that is the reality.

It seems to me to be either a justification, or any one of the New Democrats would stand in his or her place and say that we should not have any trade with a country, if that is really and truly what the member and other members within the New Democratic Party believe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North just reminded me of something, and that is how easy the government and its leader find it to consider the possibility of doing business with dictatorships. Indeed, dictatorships are the most efficient form of government, the quickest to make decisions and the easiest to do business with. I would like the member to tell us whether he agrees with his leader in this regard.

● (1705)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, do not ask me to defend the Conservative Party or the Conservative government. If we put this bill to the side and I was given unlimited time, I would love to talk about the Conservative government and its attitude toward the chamber. In fact, earlier today I got to talk about it.

Never before in the history of this country have we seen such an assault on democracy. The fair elections act and time allocations are examples. There is a litany of things, and that is just dealing with process. If I were to start talking about issues, you would have to seek unanimous consent to allow me adequate time to address it, Mr. Speaker, and I would suggest some might want to bring sleeping bags—

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Not a chance.

Mr. Ryan Leef: And earplugs.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I say so because it would take a long time for me to draw that debate to a conclusion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I am not sure if the hon. member is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to waive the limit on time.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Sure I am, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I am not seeing any consent for that.

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Resuming debate, the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the great and hard-working member for Huron—Bruce. His speech follows mine.

I would like to join my colleagues in voicing support for the implementation of the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement. On November 27, 2013, our Conservative government unveiled the global markets action plan. This strategy is part of our ongoing efforts to create jobs, growth, and prosperity for Canadians. The global market action plan will focus on 80 countries that have been identified as target markets for Canadian business. The plan aims to grow our exports, which are vital to Canada as a trading nation. For example, the plan foresees increasing the percentage of Canadian small and medium-sized enterprises that are active in emerging markets from 29% to 50% by 2018.

However, we will not focus only on traditional areas, such as exports. Canadian companies need to innovate to survive. Businesses that make science, innovation, and research and development a core part of their strategy are creating the kinds of skilled, well-paying jobs that we want here in Canada, so the plan will also work to stimulate new innovation partnerships.

Gaining preferential market access is also an important role of the government's strategy. We cannot afford to hold back while our competitors are securing important trade deals. We need to be sure that we can compete and that we can deliver on the expectations of Canada's exporters, investors, and service providers. They have made it clear that we need to help them open doors so that they can generate jobs and growth in their communities. This is precisely why bolstering Canada's commercial relationships in rapidly growing markets around the world, such as Honduras, is an important part of our long-term prosperity plan.

Our Conservative government is currently pursuing an ambitious trade and investment agenda. Last fall the Prime Minister announced that an agreement in principle had been reached with the European Union. Once the Canada-EU comprehensive economic and trade agreement is implemented, it will secure access to 28 diverse markets and more than 500 million consumers. There would be 500 million new customers for Canadian businesses. The agreement will cover virtually all aspects of our trade with Europe, such as goods and services, labour mobility, investment, and procurement, including sub-national procurement, to name just a few of the areas. Canada stands to benefit from access to the world's biggest market, with a \$17 trillion GDP. This is a landmark achievement for Canada and Canadian companies.

While the agreement with the EU will bring important benefits for Canadian companies, it would be short-sighted to focus exclusively on one area of the world. In October 2012, Canada joined the negotiations for the multilateral trans-Pacific partnership, the TPP. This group includes 12 Asia-Pacific countries, and when we look at all of the current TPP countries together, we see they represent over 39% of the world's economy, with a combined GDP of \$28.1 trillion. It is absolutely critical that we take advantage of this chance to favourably position Canadian companies in the Asia-Pacific market.

Looking beyond the TPP, talks are also well under way with Japan and Korea.

I would also like to highlight our Conservative government's most recent international trade announcement, the launch of modernization and expansion negotiations with Israel. During his first official visit to the region, the Prime Minister confirmed that we will modernize existing chapters in the Canada-Israel free trade agreement in the areas of market access for goods, rules of origin, institutional provisions, and dispute settlements. In addition to updating key areas, Canada will also seek to negotiate new chapters in the areas of trade facilitation, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, intellectual property, electronic commerce, labour, and environment. This undertaking will enhance the bilateral commercial flows by reducing technical barriers, enhancing co-operation, increasing transparency in regulatory matters, and reducing the transaction costs for businesses.

•(1710)

The updated Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement is yet another aspect of our broad international trade agenda. Modernization of free trade agreements, like the one we are undertaking with Israel, are about keeping Canadian companies competitive.

The issue of competitiveness is also at the heart of why we need to implement our free trade agreement with Honduras. The U.S. and EU already have free trade agreements with Honduras. How can we give our companies an edge if we cannot ensure they are getting comparable treatment? Keeping pace with Canada's main competitors is just one reason that we need to move forward with this deal.

There are other benefits to the free trade agreement as well, which I would like to reiterate. First, the agreement would help Canadian producers and exporters by eliminating tariffs. That is what free trade does. This will help a variety of Canadian companies and sectors, such as chemical products, wood, pulp, pulp and paper products, vehicles, auto parts, as well as fish and seafood. It will also be advantageous to Canadian agriculture producers in areas such as beef, pork, and processed potato products. Canada's service providers would enjoy enhanced commitments in sectors of export interest to Canada, such as natural resources, professional services, information and communication technologies.

Moreover, Canadian investors would be protected by the agreement's legally binding obligations to ensure they will be treated in a non-discriminatory manner and have the ability to access transparent, impartial, and binding dispute settlements.

As part of Canada's 21st century approach to trade agreements, Canada has also included language on corporate social responsibility, as we heard from my colleague earlier in this free trade agreement. This acknowledges Canada's expectations that our companies observe internationally recognized standards of responsible business conduct, both at home and abroad.

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Our commitment to supporting good corporate governance does not end there. Along with the free trade agreement, we are also ratifying parallel agreements between Canada and Honduras on labour co-operation and environmental co-operation. This is part of our commitment to make sure that labour and environmental practices do not suffer at the hands of increased trade.

With such a comprehensive approach to free trade agreement negotiations, it is no surprise that the resulting Canada-Honduras free trade agreement is a high-quality agreement. Its benefits, and those of the government's and other international trade initiatives, should be clear to all hon. members. That is why I am urging that this House adopt this agreement.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in this debate. The Conservatives are always saying that the NDP is against free trade and jobs. If you listen to them, you would think we were against breathing.

We have the right to wonder how an agreement like this will benefit the people of Longueuil, whom I represent. It is not because we are closed-minded. For example, we are well aware that free trade with Europe will be extremely beneficial to the cattle and beef industry. It is good to see the benefits of that agreement: we are going to sell Europe something and Europe is going to sell us something else. I agree that that has to be regulated.

However, what am I supposed to tell the people of Longueuil about the practical benefits of an agreement with a country such as this? Am I supposed to tell them that this free trade agreement is a good idea? We are going to sell Honduras certain products. The member mentioned a few sectors, but things are still rather unclear. What is more, the benefits of the agreement do not carry much weight when people realize what the political situation is like over there and even less so when they hear that we are taking in Honduran refugees. How can we reconcile these two things?

• (1715)

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, I was reminded earlier that yesterday was the trade deadline in the NHL. New Democrats are so much against trade that they wanted to cancel that day too.

I cannot speak specifically to the member's riding; I can tell him what it means to Elgin—Middlesex—London, my riding. I am certain that if that is the case, it would help all places across Canada, but certainly it would benefit in the area of agricultural goods and the movement of beef and pork, as I mentioned in my speech.

Ours is an area of southern Ontario that drastically needs the trade that fell off from the United States during the economic downturn. It would benefit the manufacturing equipment that we make, and the chemicals that Canada can sell around the world.

I mentioned industrial machinery. Vehicles and auto parts are another sector. All of these things currently have very high trade tariff levels in Honduras, up to 15%, and they would disappear with a free trade agreement. That would certainly mean that manufacturers, small businesses, and small machine shops in my own riding could have work through free trade with Honduras.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments about the importance of signing this free trade agreement with Honduras.

I would like to put on the record, again, that many of the New Democrats, in fact all of them, are against trade. Specifically, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour said that trade agreements are job destroying, and the NDP member for British Columbia Southern Interior has written that free trade agreements threaten the very existence of our nation.

I think it is important to note that the NDP does not understand how trade can lift people out of poverty and promote human rights and provide security.

I wonder if my colleague would comment on how he feels this free trade agreement would improve investment, increase job creation in Honduras, and here, as well as lifting the Honduran people out of some of the difficulties they are currently experiencing.

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kitchener—Conestoga for his hard work, now and in the past, in Honduras.

As a small businessman, an entrepreneur my whole life, it has been about trying to create economic opportunities. I think we raise the standard of living and the approach of any entity, whether it is my riding currently, trying to create jobs, or doing trade with Honduras and offering them a greater opportunity to trade with Canada and thus create jobs and some financial wherewithal.

Improving the standard of living helps us around the world, wherever we have done trade agreements. Some might say, "Well, it is Honduras. We are talking about millions, not billions or trillions". Well, the millions mean something to somebody. It means something to an entrepreneur in Honduras. He or she can reach out to some 35 million more customers in Canada because there has been a free trade agreement. It gives them the opportunity to do better with their family, with employment, and to hire more people in their own community too.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House to speak to the Canada-Honduras trade agreement. I have been listening intently to the other speakers.

First and foremost, it is important to point out, as a previous speaker has already mentioned, that Canada is already trading with Honduras. It is not that we are not doing trade with Honduras and are now exploring this; we are doing millions of dollars in trade with Honduras currently. We are talking about the reduction or elimination of tariffs. That is where we are as far as the debate goes and the essence of the trade agreement.

Once this agreement is in force, nearly 70% of the tariffs that are in place today would be eliminated. Over the length of the deal, which is to be fully implemented within 5 to 15 years, over 98% of the tariffs that are currently in place between us and Honduras would be eliminated. That is important to recognize.

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The population is about 8.3 million people. Over the last 25 years, the population has almost doubled. This is a very fast growing country. With countries that are fast growing, there are tremendous opportunities for growth and innovation, certainly for growth in our trade.

The population in Honduras has grown between 3% and 4% for the last number of years, and not only is the population growing, but its economy is growing as well. It is not a very industrialized nation. That in itself presents many more opportunities for Canadian manufacturers, whether it is in plastics, or any other products that may be needed in an economy that is growing, diversifying, and moving forward.

It is also important for people to note that we are not the first country trying to finalize a deal for trade with Honduras. The United States signed its trade agreement with Honduras almost 10 years ago, in 2006. The European Union signed one in 2013. Certainly there is a precedent there, which leads to my next important point, which is that Canada participates in the tariff elimination so our agricultural producers can compete with American producers and enjoy the same opportunity that they do

I will give an example of where that is hurting producers in my riding of Huron—Bruce, with edible soybeans and the lack of a deal with South Korea. There are extremely high tariffs on edible soybeans. The United States has its trade agreement with South Korea, and this is putting producers at a disadvantage in Huron—Bruce today. It means that the premium, not the price, not the basis, but the premium that a producer of edible soybeans would receive, is diminished because of the tariff that is applied to them. That is what we are talking about.

Again, Huron—Bruce is in southwestern Ontario. A lot of beef and pork is grown there. To give the size, scope, and scale just of Ontario, we are looking at about 4.8 million hogs and 600,000 head of cattle per year that are taken to market. There is tremendous opportunity in the red meat sector with this trade deal.

Of note in the last number of years, and I give Jim Clark from Ontario Corn Fed Beef top marks on this, is that a brand of corn-fed beef has been developed that is reaching across the world as a premium product. A lot of the beef producers in Alberta are sweating because they know that corn-fed beef from Ontario is the best. About 55% of the cattle in Ontario are going to this program, and for those producers, there is opportunity.

I should also mention some of the tariffs, on a percentage basis, that some of our producers would experience. Beef and pork are both at 15%.

• (1720)

Another product that could certainly be exported from Huron—Bruce, and from coast to coast, is maple syrup. It is about 10%, on average. We are looking at about 10.5% on agricultural products going into the Honduran market.

We have over \$3 million a year in sales to Honduras. There is a great opportunity to grow that by working with people on the ground to knock down those barriers and get more products into the hands of the Honduran people.

I would also note that it is vitally important in a lot of these projects and trade deals, certainly with developing nations, for there to be a world-class port facility. Honduras, fortunately, has a world-class port facility that allows for containers to be shipped in and out. That in itself is also of value. Again, that is likely why we have had a long-term trade relationship with Honduras.

We should not only look at what is in it for Canada on an export basis; we should look at what we are bringing in and the value for the people in Honduras.

There are some products that we as Canadians consume a lot of, which would be coffee, bananas, pineapples, bananas, etcetera. Even though they may not be milk and eggs, for most Canadians these are staples in many of our diets. The reduction of tariffs on those products coming in would be good for Canadians. It would be good for all Canadians, regardless of income and wealth. It would allow their families to put those products on the table at a lower cost than they are today.

If we look at infrastructure, what are some of the issues Hondurans are faced with? They are probably consumed with infrastructure issues, such as roads and bridges, safe drinking water, and sanitary sewers in their cities and reaching into their urban areas, where it is applicable. We have world-class engineering and construction firms here in Canada. I am sure that they are doing business in Honduras right now, but this would allow them to have an expanded role and better opportunities for trade there.

I would like to talk a little more about Huron—Bruce, if I may. Huron—Bruce is a large rural riding in southwestern Ontario. I have mentioned beef and pork production. The area is a huge producer of grains, corn, soy beans, wheat, and other specialty products that may not be common to people from coast to coast.

We have the deepest freshwater port in Lake Huron, which allows for tremendous opportunities. A large amount of grain is shipped in and out of Goderich each and every year, which presents further opportunities. Maybe the Canada-Honduras trade agreement would not change the trade picture in Huron—Bruce overnight, but when we add the cumulative effect of all the trade agreements, it would make a difference for agricultural producers.

We also have the largest inland holding facility for grains, with the Hensall co-op.

I can remember in the 2005 election, back when corn was in the \$2 range and farmers were legitimately struggling, one of the commitments we made to our producers was something we heard from them. They did not want to earn their living from the mailbox. They wanted to earn their living from the marketplace. I am proud to say that eight or nine years later, that is what they are doing. It is not only because of the trade agreements. There are a lot of other factors that go along with it. However, these trade agreements have added up and made significant improvements to the situation for our producers.

We can take a look at the price of a great number of commodities and look at where they have gone. We can take a look at a great number of farmland values and how they have increased since 2005. This is all because what we are trying to do is set up markets, reduce barriers, and work with other countries. We work with their veterinarians and food inspection agencies so that when a food issue comes up, they can react quickly and know that we have mechanisms here in Canada to protect the export of our food and food products. We have done that.

• (1725)

One other product I have not mentioned is the great hardwood lumber that comes out of Huron—Bruce. It is world-class hardwood maple, oak, and cherry. There are great products coming out. There is walnut as well, whether veneer or hardwood flooring. These are products that would now have the tariffs reduced. I believe on wood products it is around 15%. We will see that reduced.

As these are reduced, our products will become more competitive with the U.S. and with the European Union. That is good for Canadians, it is good for Canadian producers, and it is certainly good for a riding like mine, Huron—Bruce.

I am glad to take questions from the opposition.

• (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 5:30, there will not be time today for questions and comments, as the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

MARINE MAMMAL REGULATIONS

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC) moved that Bill C-555, An Act respecting the Marine Mammal Regulations (seal fishery observation licence), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Yukon for seconding this bill. I know he is quite passionate about the topic.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-555, An Act respecting the Marine Mammal Regulations (seal fishery observation licence). I believe that this is a sensible proposition and one that deserves the support of the House.

The proposed change to the Marine Mammal Regulations is straightforward and to the point. Essentially, it seeks to increase the distance unauthorized persons must maintain from seal harvesters. The bill would change the safety distance to a full nautical mile instead of the present half nautical mile.

The House should endorse this bill to show that we support the legitimate economic activities of the sealers. We should provide as safe an environment as possible for them to work in. Each day spent on the ice is a day spent on the ragged edge of safety, and that is without opponents putting the sealers lives in danger by disrupting the seal hunt.

Private Members' Business

This bill would serve to strengthen the safety aspect of the Marine Mammal Regulations and enhance the government's ability to enforce the requirements set out in the regulations. To be clear, the intention is to preserve the authority and discretion of the Governor in Council to modify the regulations in the future through the normal regulatory process, as opposed to having to do it by legislation.

For decades now there have been many radical groups that have wanted to disrupt the seal hunt, but there are also those who legitimately want to monitor the hunting up close. Any person can apply to Fisheries and Oceans Canada for a licence to observe the seal harvest, and I want to stress that this is a licence to observe and not a licence to intervene. Any person failing to respect the condition of the licence can indeed be fined or arrested. Thankfully, these incidents have been few and far between.

Indeed, the government can and will refuse to issue licences to anyone who intends to disrupt the seal harvest or otherwise interfere with sealers' activities. Under the regulations, anyone convicted of violating the conditions of a sealing fishery observation licence may not be eligible for another licence in the future.

There are those who do not want to comply and do not want licences. They simply want to disrupt the seal hunt. These are the people we must be concerned with.

It is the safety concerns pointed out by DFO officials that we are working on. The recommendation is to go from a half nautical mile buffer to the full nautical mile to ensure that people will not be able to break up the ice when they approach.

I want to point out that there have actually been recorded incidents in the past when large, unlicensed vessels have been there simply to disrupt the livelihoods of sealers. When these large vessels are out on the ice floes where the sealers legally are, the ice can be broken a long way away. Big ships within a half nautical mile have indeed caused some very dangerous situations in the past. We are not saying that we can stop them forever, but what we can do through this bill is keep them at a safe distance. That is what we are really asking for.

The additional cushion would ensure that seal harvesters could go about their jobs without the fear of disruption from vessels that come too close to the sealing activity.

We fully support the legitimate seal industry. We are steadfast in saying that the seal harvest is a humane, sustainable, and well-regulated activity. This is not an attempt to disguise or hide the seal hunt. This bill would do nothing to change the rules under which legitimate licensed observers must carry themselves. Any attempt to paint this as a way to hide the hunt is more of the same misinformation that has been going on for some time.

Our government fully supports the Canadian sealing industry, as I have said. For over 300 years, it has been in business. It would ensure sealers' safety in carrying on this long-standing and crucial industry.

Private Members' Business

The Canadian sealing industry has a highly professional workforce committed to upholding high standards in the harvest efforts. Our government is doing what it takes to ensure that the harvest remains as safe as possible. While we respect the right of individuals to form opinions on any matter, we will not accept illegal activities that attempt to disrupt a legitimate industry such as the seal hunt.

• (1735)

The government will continue to defend the seal hunt as an important source of food and income for coastal and Inuit communities. We stand behind the thousands of Canadians who depend on the seal harvest to provide a livelihood for their families. We are defending those Canadians who rely on the harvest to maintain their culture, tradition, and quality of life.

I encourage all members of the House to support this bill and help ensure the safety of our sealers.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly supporting this bill and the measures contained within.

When we received the bill, we did our due diligence and contacted people who are involved in the industry, those for it and those against it. We consulted with folks about the legislation, the industry, and what was going on.

One of the comments we heard from the Sealers Association was about how the government does not enforce the half nautical mile, let alone extending that to a full nautical mile.

While I will be supporting the principle of the bill, I do want to ask the member a question. What evidence did the member have? Were there any incidents, injuries, or damage caused under the current regulations that required the distance to be extended?

Mr. Greg Kerr: Mr. Speaker, more in recent years, the department and the coast guard have become concerned. Those who are licensed can get very close. They are monitored. There are people from government constantly monitoring the activity.

The most notable incident was when an environmentalist group brought a boat in several years ago. They did indeed get up into that range and did start breaking up a lot of ice. What was apparent then to the authorities was that the ice could easily break at that distance, within the half nautical mile. That became a major concern.

I did meet with industry, and I am not aware that it had concerns about monitoring and policing. That is certainly something I would pass along. I do know they welcome and support the extended distance, because when their folks are out standing on the ice, the last thing they want to worry about is the ice disappearing below them.

We are heading in the right direction. If there is more needed down the road, I am sure we will be quite prepared to look at it.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a brief question for my colleague. It is kind of a general question about the seal harvest.

Some opponents of the seal hunt will say that Canadians do not support the seal harvest. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

• (1740)

Mr. Greg Kerr: Mr. Speaker, I have learned a lot in preparing for this bill in terms of the incredible importance in the north and the communities that really depend on this activity, certainly in Quebec and Atlantic Canada. Even in the member's area, the coast of B.C., there is interest in what goes on.

There are a lot of issues that go on in the seal business. We talked about whether there are too many seals. This particular industry has been established. It had a black eye decades ago. There are images, such as of Paul McCartney and his wife out on the ice, and it becomes very dramatic. By the way, that in itself was a safety issue, but we will leave that one alone.

What we are finding from reasonably thinking people in Canada is that, whether or not they like the industry, it is a legal, legitimate industry that provides a lot of income and support to families. In that case, if it is going to be done, which it is, then people want to see the industry protected in the right way. Nobody believes those illegal activities should be condoned or supported. This is one more effort to make sure the illegal activity is controlled.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, I thank the hon. member for West Nova for introducing the bill. It is an important issue in our province and our region, as well as Quebec and other parts of this country.

I want to take this opportunity to talk about the reasons I think the bill is important and also address some of the mythology and controversy that surround seal fishing.

For coastal communities across the Atlantic region, Quebec, and Nunavut, the seal harvest represents a traditional way of life. Many fishermen and first nation communities earn their livelihood by fishing for seals in late winter or early spring. The seal hunt in the gulf is under way now.

Our indigenous people have been fishing seal for over 4,000 years and our European ancestors and early Canadian settlers fished for seals starting in the early 1600s. It was once considered an honourable way of life to make a living in Canada.

Seals provided food for coastal families and communities, the skins and pelts were used for clothing, and the oil was used for heating and lights. Much of the same is true today. Seals continue to be a primary source of food for the Inuit and coastal communities; the skins and pelts are still used for clothing; and the oils, containing omega-3, are now used for health benefits.

However, there is a growing mythology surrounding the seal harvest that the practice is neither sustainable nor humane. Like any practice of hunting or fishing, when managed correctly, I believe the seal industry is both sustainable and humane.

Private Members' Business

Seal populations in the Atlantic have seen a dramatic increase over the past 40 years. The Atlantic grey seal population has seen a thirtyfold increase since the 1960s, while the Atlantic harp seal population has quadrupled since the early 1970s. Its population today is estimated to be over eight million. Currently, fishing allotments of seals do not threaten their sustainability.

Research out of the Atlantic Veterinary College has consistently shown that current methods of killing seals are humane. Thousands of hours of research have been put into the study, and that research continues.

Let me be clear. My New Democrat colleagues and I support a humane harvest, and any cruelty to animals is completely unacceptable. We continue to urge the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to monitor the harvest carefully to ensure that all safety regulations are carried out.

I also want to take a moment to talk about the difference between the seal harvest and a seal cull. When I speak to many Canadians about this issue, there seems to be some confusion.

The seal harvest is a fishery in support of a commercial industry. It is managed similarly to other fisheries, such as lobster or groundfish. The harvest takes place annually during late winter, usually from February until late March. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans establishes a total allowable catch every year based on the precautionary approach and scientific research.

A cull, on the other hand, is a process of removing animals to achieve a specific goal. A seal cull has been proposed by the Senate Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in a bid to conserve cod stocks. Seals are a known predator of cod, and it has been hypothesized that reducing the seal populations could help the recovery of the cod in Atlantic Canada.

This has been a very controversial recommendation, and my office has received numerous calls and emails from concerned Canadians. Again, I want to be clear and say that we do not support this recommendation. I believe that any cull needs to be backed by scientific research, and it simply does not exist in this case. An experimental cull just to see what happens is completely unacceptable.

Jeff Hutchings, a renowned marine biologist from Dalhousie University, testified in front of the Senate committee and said the following:

In my view, a cull of grey seals for the purpose of improving fisheries productivity would represent an insufficient reason for initiating such a cull for two reasons. First, the effects of such a cull, as I indicated, on the recovery of cod or other species cannot be credibly predicted from a science perspective; and second, the deliberate killing of one species native to Canada because of the human-induced depletion of another native species, ultimately caused by politically expedient but scientifically unjustified management decisions, would be difficult to defend from a variety of perspectives.

● (1745)

It is important to note that 20 years after the collapse of the cod fishery, Atlantic Canadians are still dealing with the devastation that overfishing can cause. That is why my New Democrat colleagues and I fully support fishery management decisions based on science. We will continue to call upon the Conservative government to reduce the cuts it has made to scientific research in Canada, and

specifically to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, so that it can carry out its mandate to protect fish and fish habitat and to manage our fisheries.

It is the controversial nature of the seal harvest that has led to the proposal for this bill. Fishing is a dangerous occupation. We lose far too many fishermen at sea every year because of accidents or weather. That is why I will be supporting this bill at second reading.

The bill seeks to strengthen the marine mammal regulations, increasing the distance individuals can be from active seal fishing. Earlier, in my question to the sponsor of the bill, I made the point that if any distance regulations are not enforced by the authorities, they are meaningless. I recognize that there was an incident a couple of years ago. However, it has been conveyed to me that, while the industry appreciates this increase in distance, from a safety point of view it wishes the authorities would properly enforce whatever regulations are there to provide protection. Having been involved in workplace health and safety issues for much of my life, that is what this comes down to.

In conclusion, all Canadians have the right to protest and voice their opinions. However, interfering with seal fishing is dangerous for all those involved. This bill would help keep fishermen, DFO employees, observers, and the general public safe.

I look forward to studying the bill in more detail at committee in the upcoming weeks.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to join in this debate as well. I have had an opportunity to discuss this with our fisheries critic, the member for Cardigan, who recommends that we support this legislation.

There are two aspects to this legislation, and they are the proximity of firearms and the impact of them on the ice.

I grew up in the coastal community of Glace Bay. My riding is predominantly coastal. Anybody who grows up along the coastline of Nova Scotia knows the perils of the ice.

There were not many playgrounds in Glace Bay in the sixties. It was a pretty modest community, and my neighbourhood was certainly modest. I had the great benefit of having the Atlantic Ocean about a nine iron away from my front door. In the summer, it was our swimming pool. In the fall, when the tide was coming in, we would race around the extending points trying not to get knocked over by the incoming tide. In March, the drift ice and the pack ice that came into the coast of Glace Bay became our playground, and we would go down on the ice, much to the chagrin of our folks.

The member for South Shore—St. Margaret's probably went home being wet up to the kneecaps. I recall getting a crack on the behind a number of times because I would be scootching. But I was a kid, six feet tall, and bulletproof. I did not understand the perils of the ice, but that is where we spent a lot of time as kids. My heart would be in my mouth if my own kids went down to play on the ice now.

Private Members' Business

Living close to the ocean, one becomes a bit ice-savvy and aware of shifts in the ice. A change in the direction of the wind or the wind picking up shifts the ice and opens up perilous water. It is easy to get in trouble.

One can only imagine sealers on the ice and the great peril they would be in if a boat were in close proximity. The shifting of the ice would place the sealers in peril.

I appreciated the comments by my colleagues from West Nova and Dartmouth—Cole Harbour that we look beyond the debate about the seal hunt. The seal hunt is a legitimate industry and should be treated as such. This is not a debate about the legitimacy or the necessity of the seal hunt. We are past that. All parties in the House support our sealers and the sealing industry.

I am very fortunate to have a progressive company in my own riding, Louisbourg Seafoods. Jimmy Kennedy is the owner, and Dannie Hansen is the CAO. They are looking at ways to better serve the sealers and access the great resource that we have with seals. They are very high in protein content. They are looking at ways to process that product and bring it to market, so that it gets the value it deserves.

I have been fortunate in my time in the House. Over the last 14 years, I have had the opportunity to sit on fisheries and oceans committee. It was six years ago when my colleague from South Shore—St. Margaret's was chair of the committee and my colleague from Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission was parliamentary secretary. We had the opportunity to go out on the ice.

● (1750)

We choppered out to a Canadian Coast Guard ship and we were able to monitor the hunt taking place. We brought with us a number of leading veterinarians from Prince Edward Island. They, along with us, were able to get on the ice.

The study itself was driven by the seal hunt and whether or not the harvesting practices were adequate.

The strong evidence that we were able to witness and the strong testimony that was shared with us by the veterinarians was overwhelming that this is indeed a humane harvesting practice and is something that we should not be fearful of. They referred to it as an abattoir on the ice. They said this is absolutely every bit as humane as any slaughterhouse in this country. That is one aspect that really stuck with me.

The other one was the peril that sealers place themselves in in order to take part in this fishery. They are out there in the elements. They are on the ice, and the ice is moving. They are exposed to those types of things. I was really impressed with just how nimble they were in getting around on the ice while they took part in the fishery, but it was obvious that the danger and the fear factor were great while they went about and plied their trade. Most were using the hakapik, but some were using firearms.

The bill addresses not just the ice and the movement of the ice, but it would also provide that additional buffer, that additional security for those who are using high-powered firearms in the harvesting of the seals.

I remember the conversation at the time at committee. We had wondered at the time whether a greater buffer should be placed between observers and those who were harvesting the seals. I recall those discussions coming out of that particular study and I believe a recommendation had been made there.

I think the bill being presented today makes absolute sense. It would allow for a safer work environment for those in the fishery as well as for the observers, who absolutely have a legitimate right to take part, to observe, to hold to account those who are in the midst of that harvesting. We certainly acknowledge and respect their right to be there, but it would also give them a much higher degree of safety as they go about their business and do the necessary observation.

I want the member and the House to know that we agree with the principle of the bill. I am sure that my colleague, the member for Cardigan, will continue to work with the member on it as it goes forward, but I am pleased to stand here today and recognize its merit and offer it support.

● (1755)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in this debate and to share our government's perspective on Bill C-555. Let me begin by congratulating the member for West Nova, who represents his constituents so well and is leading the charge to protect the safety of all those involved with the seal hunt.

It is clear that our government is committed to developing regulations that are fair and enforceable. This bill, which proposes amendments to the marine mammal regulations, is of great importance, as it concerns the safety of everyone involved in the seal harvest. That is why our government is supporting this bill.

Marine mammal regulations regulate matters with respect to the management and control of fishing for marine mammals and related activities in Canada or in Canadian waters. The proposed bill would require the Governor in Council to amend the marine mammal regulations to increase the distance that a person must maintain from another person who is fishing for seals, except under the authority of a seal fishery observation licence. To be clear, the intention is to preserve the authority and discretion of the Governor in Council to modify the regulations in the future through the normal regulatory process, as opposed to having to do it by legislation. The proposed change to the regulations would increase from one-half nautical mile to one nautical mile the distance that an unlicensed observer must keep from a person who is fishing for seals. It is a pretty simple bill.

Every year, the Canadian seal harvest attracts observers. Seal fishery observation licences are provided to people wishing to observe the hunt where the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans determines that issuing the licence will not disrupt the seal fishery. Licensed observers have been and will continue to be able to monitor Canada's commercial seal harvest in accordance with the existing regulations and related licence conditions. Our government strives to ensure that there is a balance between the rights of observers and those of sealers, as well as overall safety for everyone.

Private Members' Business

What this bill would do is to help address the ongoing concerns about unlicensed observers who may pose a threat to the safety of everyone involved in the seal harvest. Let me be clear that Canadian sealers have nothing to hide from the public. However, in order to respond more quickly to the actions of dangerous activists, like those who have a stated purpose of disrupting the seal hunt and who act accordingly, this bill proposes amendments to the marine mammal regulations to increase the distance that individuals must stay away from sealers engaged in sealing activities. These changes would be made to ensure the safety of everyone involved in the seal hunt: hunters, observers, fisheries officers, and others.

Our government respects the rights of organizations and individuals to voice their opposition to the seal harvest. We will not, however, tolerate reckless activities that risk the safety of sealers, observers, and everyone else involved in the hunt. The proposed amendment is aimed at strengthening the management of the seal hunt to ensure that it can continue in a safe, humane, and orderly manner while further improving the safety of everyone involved. This important change would strengthen enforcement activities and assist in improving the management of the seal fishery observation licensing regime. This bill would afford enforcement officials who are operating in dangerous conditions more time to react when there is an incident such as occurred in 2008.

The Canadian seal harvest is humane, sustainable, and conducted in an open and transparent manner. Our government remains unwavering in its commitment to defend our sealing businesses and to preserve our rural coastal communities. Communities in Atlantic Canada, eastern Quebec, and the north have relied on the seal hunt as a way of life for centuries. Whether it is opening new markets or protecting traditional ones, Canadian sealers know our government is there to fight for them.

The proposed amendments to the regulations come at a time when the communities that rely on our traditional industries, like the seal harvest, need a government that is willing to fight for their rights. Canada's seal hunt has the highest standards of practice for any animal hunt in the world. Yet the European Union has placed a discriminatory ban against our seal products. Our government will continue to fight for the Canadian seal hunt in whatever arena possible, including the World Trade Organization. We are proud to protect a traditional, sustainable, and historic way of life for Canadian sealers across this great country.

● (1800)

The measures taken by the European Union have struck a blow to sealers in the north, in Quebec, and Atlantic Canada, to their families, and to Canada as a whole. Our government has taken decisive action to defend Canadian sealers in light of the European Union's very discouraging ban on seal products.

Our government has made repeated and unrelenting efforts to show the European Union and its member states the value of the seal hunt to Canadians and has challenged the European Union's ban in the World Trade Organization. We were very disappointed in the findings of the World Trade Organization panel last November that the ban could be justified on the basis of public moral concerns, and we have filed an appeal with the World Trade Organization appellate body.

One of the main concerns provoking the debate in Europe and the movement to ban seal products has to do with considerations related to the well-being of the animals. Our government is committed to applying the strictest standards in this area. That is why we have sought the best scientific advice on humane harvesting methods and adapted our regulations and licensing criteria based on that advice.

There has been an ongoing campaign put forth against Canadian sealers for a number of decades now, loaded with inaccurate and misleading allegations. It has been alleged that the seal harvest provides few economic benefits. That is false. It has been alleged that Canadians paid millions in subsidies and administrative costs for a seal harvest that is uneconomic. That is also false.

As important as the regulations are, it is also important to note that Fisheries and Oceans Canada also carries out effective monitoring, control, and surveillance programs on the sealing grounds and in coastal communities. Fisheries and Oceans is continually making improvements to its monitoring program to ensure compliance with regulations, which result in a humane and sustainable hunt. These actions should dispel the notion that the hunt is impossible to regulate and manage effectively. The Canadian Coast Guard, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the Quebec Provincial Police work in collaboration with Fisheries and Oceans enforcement staff to monitor compliance and to enforce the regulations.

We are standing up in defence of the Canadians sealers' right to earn a living, and we will continue to do so. It is about protecting everyone involved in the seal harvest, and it is the right thing to do. I thus invite all members to join me in supporting Bill C-555.

● (1805)

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of Bill C-555, an act respecting the Marine Mammal Regulations (seal fishery observation licence), but the bill, like so much other lip service the Conservative government pays to the east coast seal hunt, is a charade, a charade to make it appear that the government is actually doing something for the hunt, for sealing. It is a sham to make it appear that the government is defending the seal hunt, an illusion to make it appear that the government is a champion of the seal hunt. All the bill amounts to is Conservative sleight of hand.

Bill C-555 would increase the distance an unofficial observer, in other words, anyone who is not there to hunt, a seal protester, for example, must keep from the sealing. Right now it is against the law for an unofficial observer to come within a half nautical mile of the hunt. Bill C-555 would increase that buffer zone to a full nautical mile, so it would increase from a half nautical mile to a full nautical mile.

However, the half-mile buffer there now is not enforced, so increasing the distance to a full nautical mile is lip service. That is what I mean by lip service. It basically means nothing.

Private Members' Business

It is a good concept, and it is one my party supports. How could we not? It is about safety, in theory anyway, but for all intents and purposes, it means nothing. Sealers on the ground in my province of Newfoundland and Labrador say that it is a good idea, but they do not see how it would change anything.

Frank Pinhorn, executive director of the Canadian Sealers Association, says it is frustrating, because as it stands, regulations are not enforced with the half nautical mile zone. Now the Conservatives would increase the buffer zone to a full mile. Who are they trying to fool? It is nobody on this side of the House, nobody back home in Newfoundland and Labrador. They are not fooling us, so what is the purpose of the bill? There is no purpose. It is a nuisance bill.

The Conservatives are trying to divide the New Democratic caucus on the seal hunt, only there is no divide. New Democrats fully support a humane and sustainable hunt. It is our policy, period, end of discussion.

The 1985 report of the Royal Commission on Seals and the Sealing Industry in Canada quoted a sealer/fisherman, which are one and the same, who described himself back then, 29 years ago, as an endangered species. Let me quote that fisherman/sealer:

I am endangered but I still fight back. I will survive. I will not let animal rights become more important than human rights. I will not let people give souls to animals while they rob me of my human dignity and right to earn a livelihood.

Today's sealer/fisherman is more endangered than ever. Outport Newfoundland and Labrador is more endangered than ever. The commercial fisheries are more endangered than ever. Sealers and fishermen are one and the same. Sealers are fishermen. Fishermen are sealers. Their livelihoods are in jeopardy. Their numbers dwindle every year.

According to the news back home this week, the fishermen's union is raising red flags about the possibility of significant cuts to the total allowable catch for the northern shrimp fishery. Shrimp has been one of the most lucrative fisheries since the collapse of the groundfish stocks, such as cod, in the early 1990s.

Just today the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies released a report on the east coast fishery, a report that slams the Conservative government for failing to reform fisheries management, two decades after the cod moratorium. The northern cod fishery was shut down in 1992, 22 years ago, and there is still no recovery plan. How shocking is that?

Sealers are fishermen. They are one and the same. What does the Conservative government have to offer? It increases the buffer zone for seal hunt observers to one nautical mile from a half nautical mile. It is a charade, a sham, an illusion, a joke.

• (1810)

I attended Seal Day on the Hill back in February, a day when government reaffirmed its support for the seal hunt, but the proof of the government's commitment to the seal hunt is not in the pâté, but in the policy, in the action. The east coast seal hunt has seen the biggest collapse of seal markets in its history under the Conservative government. That is a fact.

Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Taiwan, the European Union and all of its member countries have banned the importation of Canadian seal products while the Conservative government has sat idly by touting its undying support. What happened to China and to the markets there that the Conservative government was poised to tap into? What happened to those markets? Silence.

The Conservative government is on the verge of a free trade deal with the European Union, but if the government were so solidly behind the seal hunt, like it says it is, why did it not make the seal ban a make or break issue during those trade talks? Instead the Conservative government agreed to have the EU ban decided by the World Trade Organization, which upheld the ban last fall. The Conservative government is appealing the WTO's decision, but again, if the government were serious it would have made the EU ban a make or break consideration in trade talks. It did not.

Instead we see empty action, or nuisance bills like this one, to increase the buffer zone around the hunt from half a nautical mile to a full nautical mile when the government cannot even enforce the half nautical mile zone. The sealer today is as endangered as the fishermen. They are one and the same. There is no vision for the fishery or the seal hunt, no blueprint for rebirth.

The Conservative government's latest move regarding the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery is to eliminate minimum processing requirements as part of the EU trade deal. Now the trade deal is a good one. The elimination of seafood tariffs is a fabulous thing. It is being lauded in all quarters of the fishery, but the question must be asked, what will be the impact on our fisheries, on our processing sector, of the lifting of those minimum processing requirements?

The Conservative government does not give up \$280 million in compensation for nothing, especially when it has done nothing for our fisheries for decades, other than to cut the guts out of science, cut the guts out of fisheries management, and cut the guts out of enforcement.

To conclude, sealers and fishermen are one and the same. As I mentioned before, we support this bill for what it is worth, but it does not address the underlying problems of our seal hunt or of our fishers. Make no mistake, the fight in us is vicious yet. The seal hunt is a part of Newfoundland and Labrador culture. It is woven in our history. It is who we are. More so than any other slight, Newfie on down, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians take any criticism of the seal hunt as a direct personal attack, not just against us, who we are as a people, but against our forefathers and our very outport souls.

To attack the seal hunt is to attack Newfoundland and Labrador. To attack the seal hunt is to poke the bear that is the fighting Newfoundlander. But the government's trying to pull off a charade, a sham, an illusion that it is a defender of the hunt when it is not must also be pointed out. So if they increase the buffer zone around the hunt, fill your boots, Mr. Speaker.

Stand in the House and blow and sputter about all the Conservatives are doing in defence of the hunt, but the proof is in the action and there is none.

• (1815)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in the House and support this private member's bill. I have a few words of advice for the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

I am a little surprised, because every once in a while we get a private member's bill that every party in the House can support. Usually we take that opportunity to commend the member for bringing the bill forward, and we recognize the good and salient points in the piece of legislation. We look at it as an opportunity to reach across the aisle, instead of trying to kick someone in the teeth.

I have heard foolishness before, but this is just patent foolishness. Here is the issue. It is an issue that every side of the House can agree on, so let us find ways to agree instead of disagree.

I suspect that the hon. member is smarting a little bit. As a new member of Parliament, he misspoke. He suggested that the seal hunt should be ended and that the days of the seal hunt were over. There was not any talk about it being in the blood of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The language used was that it was time that we moved beyond it, that the seal hunt was a thing of the past. I know that he feels a little bad about that and is trying to make up for it, so we will forgive him for his remarks. However, I will not forgive him for failing to reach across the aisle and join hands on a subject we can agree on.

I was the chair of the fisheries committee for a couple of years. I sat on the fisheries committee, along with the parliamentary secretary and a number of other people in the chamber. Some very good work was done on that committee, and some very good work was done on the seal hunt. I got to be the chair at the time of the seal hunt report.

There are a couple of facts that have to be recognized. First of all, this is private members' legislation. It recommends doubling the distance for unlicensed observers. Most unlicensed observers are in vessels. They are not on the ice, they are in a vessel. The *Farley Mowat* attempted to ram sealers in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Had it been successful, it probably would have killed those sealers. That is what we are talking about. We are talking about risk of life and limb.

I would go a step further and recommend to the hon. member for West Nova, who brought this bill forward, and to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans that we should look at the distance that we allow licensed observers to go. Quite frankly, there should be no licensed observers outside of the international group of veterinarians who are already on the ice during every single hunt.

This is the most closely managed large animal hunt in the world. We have RCMP officers on the ice. We have Fisheries and Oceans Canada officers on the ice. We have firearms folks on the ice. We have people from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency out there, making sure that the sealers have taken their courses on how to identify that the animal has been killed properly and how to skin the

animal. We have the Coast Guard. We have the air force out there, monitoring the hunt. This is the most closely monitored large animal hunt in the world.

There is absolutely no reason whatsoever that we should allow anyone who is not a registered veterinarian closer than 300 metres or 400 metres. Over 90% of the seals are shot. Fewer than 10% are killed with a hakapik. They are shot with .222s and .223s. Those firearms will easily fire that bullet for 400 metres or 500 metres over the ice. That is the distance that people should be pushed back. If someone is a veterinarian who knows what is going on and how the animal is dying, whether it has been killed properly or not, and can identify that, he or she has a special license and moves up closer. That would save a lot of the trouble here.

• (1820)

I have pictures that were sent to me from John Levy, coming in off Georges Bank. He is 120 miles offshore. He is longlining halibut, and he is bringing his longline in with halibut after halibut. These are 30- and 40-pound fish, some of them. The skin has been raked off and the fat has been eaten, and the fish has been destroyed by grey seals.

I worked off Sable Island for nearly a decade during the 1980s. In 1980, when we flew over Sable Island we could count the seals on the spit. There were harp seals on the southeastern spit, and I think it was the southeast and northwestern spit. There were grey seals on the other spit. We could literally count them.

Today, some 30 years later, there are 300,000 grey seals. The males weigh up to 600 pounds.

What do the people who are against the seal hunt think those animals live on? What do they think the seals eat? They are not vegetarians, I can assure members. They eat fish.

It is all about balance. We do not want to kill the last seal, absolutely not. However, there is a sustainable hunt here that could be extremely lucrative. These animals are full of fat and omega-3 oil. That oil is valuable. Whether we can harvest the meat is something to be determined in the future, beyond for local consumption. The oil alone deserves to be harvested. It is healthy oil. It is good for people. It is good for everyone.

There are a couple of other points I want to make here. One of them was mentioned by other speakers and that is misleading information. The European Union, which should be our friend, has listened to misleading information. I was privileged to go with the fish committee to the European Parliament. We presented to the committee on the environment in the European Parliament on the sustainability of the seal hunt.

It was a very acrimonious meeting. We acted like professionals, we presented our evidence, but we did not get a fair hearing. Somehow, we have to move beyond that.

Private Members' Business

The other thing that all governments need to do, the provincial governments as well, is lobby the Europeans. These decisions are made in the Parliament of Europe today. They are not made in the individual member states. We have to have a presence, and we have to have a lobbying effort in the European Parliament if we are going to move ahead with any changes to the rules or any changes to the regulations on the seal hunt.

We could do it unilaterally, but we want to have their support when it happens, if we can. If we cannot, then I say we should move ahead with it.

I will give an example of how many seals there are. In the 1970s or 1980s, people sailing off the south shore of Nova Scotia might see a seal. They would probably see a whale and they would definitely see blackfish, but they might see a seal.

Three years ago, I was out in Mahone Bay and every rock had a seal on it and there were two more in the water waiting to get on that rock when the first seal got off. They are everywhere. We have to be able to bring them under control, and we have to do that in a reasonable, sustainable, and responsible manner.

We can do that if we reach across the aisle and do not treat this as a political football. This is an important piece of legislation from a member of Parliament who represents a huge piece of the fishery in Canada. It is timely and it is well meant. If we apply this, it will help to control the seal industry and help our fishery develop to the potential it has.

• (1825)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Manicouagan has five minutes.

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unlike many of the issues that are brought before the House of Commons, which are quite abstract, this bill on the Marine Mammal Regulations reflects the contemporary nature of traditional practices that are part of everyday life in Canada's northern communities.

When I say "quite abstract", I am referring to the theatrics that often go on here in the House, which I myself am guilty of from time to time. However, the subject of marine mammals, seals in particular, brings us down to earth because it is a tangible reality that can be seen in the everyday lives of northern communities, so much so that the term *atshuk*, which means "seal", has become a proper noun. It is a name. My own cousin is named Atshuk.

Traditionally, the Innu community is not made up of fishers, at least not the community of Uashat. I know that there have been some fishers among the Mamit Innuat. People still fish for seals today. However, for the Innu of Uashat-Malietenam, seals are simply something they see every day. They go about their everyday lives simply knowing that mammals, including seals, are there, since the St. Lawrence River is so close by. Uashat-Malietenam is a coastal community. Its residents are able to see seals on a daily basis.

My father has sharper eyes than I do, and he will often tell me that he saw a seal that morning. We can call them seals or whitecoats. There are a number of terms that can be used. I am not an expert, and

I am going to assume that it is seals people are seeing. My father's house faces the river and, in the winter, you can see seals on the ice.

Although the bill before us prohibits anyone who does not have a seal fishery observation licence issued by the minister to approach within one nautical mile of a person who is fishing for seals, the reality in coastal communities is that people live in close proximity to certain marine mammals.

I find it hard to imagine this distance of one nautical mile since these marine mammals live so close by. You can see them with the naked eye. When I read the bill, I realized that this distance pertains to activists and the way their activities and protests may interfere with fishing.

That has not been a problem in my riding. However, I have seen pictures of this sort of thing, just as every other Canadian has. I know that it can happen and that it can result in confrontations and people going out there and drawing international media attention. For example, we saw this with the Europeans.

These marine animals live close to humans. I am thinking of the bay in Sept-Îles, among other places. This distance of one nautical mile for observation or close contact with humans seems more or less right, since these animals get quite close to humans anyway.

We must also understand that the practice of hunting and fishing seals is a traditional practice. When I said "traditional" at the beginning of my speech, I was referring to the culture. For thousands of years, marine animals have been part of the daily diet of many communities.

As I was saying today, the last time this type of food and collective practice was brought to my attention, it was among the Mamit Innuat. These people live in the eastern part of my riding, from Natashquan eastward. Some communities make extensive use of this on a daily basis, but that is not necessarily so in my own community.

A quick read of the elements underlying the need to implement measures to define the distances from which to observe marine mammals suggests the sort of interference associated with groups and demonstrators who are ideologically opposed to the seal fishery.

I do not fish, myself, but I know that some communities do fish for food and use the fishery extensively, and that only bolsters what I have to say today. I think that my colleagues also believe in the importance of this practice. We must therefore support this essentially environmentally friendly practice.

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member will have five minutes when we resume debate on this matter.

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for tonight's opportunity to revisit a question that I first raised on February 14. I will repeat that question.

People in my region know all too well that highway 185 is deadly. It is one of the deadliest highways in Quebec. Phase three of work, the section between Saint-Antonin and Saint-Louis-du-Ha! Ha!, needs to be completed. The solution is to finish the Trans-Canada. Of the \$14 billion announced yesterday, \$4 billion was for national infrastructure, but this money will be allocated on the basis of merit and not provincial fairness.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs tell us whether the completion of the Trans-Canada—to save lives—is a project that will warrant quick access to the money for national infrastructure? I asked that question in February so that, after more than a year of waiting, we could finally know the terms of this infrastructure project and how much funding the federal government would invest in infrastructure.

The answer I got, like the majority of the answers we get from our friends opposite, was extremely disappointing and generic. The number 185 was not even mentioned in the response. There was one small element, at the very end, that may be of interest.

[*English*]

We look forward to hearing from municipalities and provinces what their infrastructure priority projects will be....

[*Translation*]

Tonight, I will try to get the government to go one step further on this, as it is an urgent need in my region. As recently as January 21, a young man, age 22, died in an accident on highway 185. That is another addition to a list of tragedies that is already far too long. In 10 years, approximately 100 people have died on this highway.

For us, turning highway 185 into highway 85 is not just a question of investing in infrastructure, it is also a question of public safety.

That tragedy happened on the stretch between Saint-Louis-du-Ha! Ha! and Saint-Antonin, a section that is still waiting to be expanded in what is called phase three of the project. It is now estimated that the work on the stretch of highway between Saint-Antonin and Saint-Louis-du-Ha! Ha! will cost more than \$550 million. The federal government has already invested \$320 million in phases one and two.

As I said before, it took too long to learn about the terms of the new federal infrastructure plan, which meant that neither the federal nor the provincial government would take any responsibility. Their little game sickened the people of Kamouraska, Rivière-du-Loup, Témiscouata and Les Basques. My constituents want the federal and provincial governments to stop this silly jurisdictional ping-pong game. They just want a safer highway.

Adjournment Proceedings

It should be noted that the highway 85 project is part of the work needed to complete the Trans-Canada Highway, as I explained earlier. Is there a more national infrastructure than the Trans-Canada Highway?

On behalf of too many families that are in mourning and in the name of common sense, can the government give us the assurance today that phase 3 of highway 85 will have quick access to the money for national infrastructure?

This evening, we have the opportunity to stop the game of ping-pong and to have the federal government take another step forward by confirming the project's access to funding. This will not solve everything because an agreement with the province is required. This side of the House is aware of that.

I will say it once more to my colleague: the federal-provincial game of ping-pong must stop. This evening, I am reaching out to my colleague. Simply saying that they will agree to provide access to the funds would be a suitable way to stop this game of ping-pong and would be very much appreciated by the people in my region. My constituents have had enough. Too many people have suffered. This must stop.

● (1835)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is squarely focused on what matters most to Canadians: helping to create jobs and economic growth and securing Canada's long-term prosperity.

With the help of Canada's economic action plan, Canada's economy has seen the best economic performance among all G7 countries in recent years, both during the global recession and throughout the recovery.

Here are the facts to prove it.

Over one million net new jobs have been created in Canada since the end of the recession in July 2009. Over this period, Canada has had the strongest job growth record in the entire G7 by far. Furthermore, Canadians have also enjoyed the strongest income growth in the G7. Canada is the only G7 country to have more than fully recovered business investment lost during the recession.

A key component of Canada's strong economic performance has been our government's stable and predictable investments in communities across the country. Our government understands that investment in public infrastructure creates jobs, promotes economic growth, and provides a high quality of life for families in every city and community across the country. In recognition of the importance of efficient public infrastructure for Canada's economic prosperity and quality of life, our government has made significant investments since 2006 to build roads, bridges, subways, rail, and much more. Indeed, under the \$33 billion building Canada plan launched in 2007, we supported over 12,000 infrastructure projects across Canada.

Adjournment Proceedings

Furthermore, economic action plan 2013 builds on our government's historic infrastructure investments with \$70 billion for public infrastructure over the next decade, including the \$53 billion new building Canada plan for provincial, territorial, and municipal infrastructure. This is the largest and longest federal investment in job-creating infrastructure in Canada's history.

In fact, just recently the Prime Minister and the Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs announced important details on the new building Canada plan. The new plan will provide municipalities, provinces, and territories with the information they need to plan public infrastructure projects in their own jurisdictions. The new plan supports projects that focus on economic growth, job creation, and productivity, including highways, roads, bridges, subways, commuter rail, and public infrastructure to ensure the prosperity of all Canadians.

While the opposition is determined to ignore these issues, they are the issues that Canadians care most about, and our government will stay focused on their priorities by providing a strong economy, lower taxes, and safe communities. Indeed, that is exactly what we have done in economic action plan 2014.

I will conclude by noting that regrettably, the member and his colleagues opposite recently voted against these measures and against communities across Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, are we not tired of hearing that?

I have a problem costing more than \$550 million, and I have a list of about 100 people who have died on a highway that should be safer. Once again, without the slightest embarrassment or shame, the member opposite concluded his remarks by saying that we voted against all that. Once again, that answer does not even mention the problem raised here this evening, highway 185, the Trans-Canada Highway. None of that was mentioned.

I was trying to resolve a major problem for the RCMs of Kamouraska, Rivière-du-Loup, Témiscouata and Les Basques, a problem that concerns the federal government. It is a section of the Trans-Canada Highway. I asked a simple question. Can the government confirm whether it is possible to access the billions of dollars that have been announced? This problem will not be solved with \$19 million or \$30 million; it is going to take hundreds of millions of dollars. This evening, we have once again been given a generic answer. The members opposite are a bunch of used car salesmen.

• (1840)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier and in the original response to this question in question period, our government has established the new building Canada plan. It was announced in budget 2013. Recently the Prime Minister and the Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs announced further details and guidelines and indicated that the application process for the new building Canada plan will become available on March 31. That language is in the recent budget.

At that time, municipalities and provinces are open to apply and identify their infrastructure priorities. We empower the municipalities and provinces to identify what their infrastructure priorities and needs are. We look forward to receiving those applications, in this case from the Province of Quebec.

[*Translation*]

INDUSTRY

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is really sad. My colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup is doing an excellent job and wants to work for his constituents. It is very sad that there is no concern or help for people back home.

Unfortunately, on February 12 workers at the General Cable factory in La Malbaie received bad news, as we have been seeing far too often under this Conservative government.

In exactly one month, this factory, which manufactures wire, cable and optical fibres, will close down for good. As Mr. Couturier, the mayor of La Malbaie, said, another bomb has fallen on our region, which has already had its share of economic struggles. This will be the third electrical cable factory to close in Quebec in five years.

General Cable has closed factories in Quebec City and Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu in the past few years. Jobs have also been cut at the Saint-Jérôme and Shawinigan facilities. Unfortunately, the company plans on transferring contracts to the United States.

Today, I want to inform the House that General Cable won the contract to supply electrical cable to connect the Churchill Falls power station to the Newfoundland grid. However, despite what the company led employees to believe, this cable will now be manufactured at an American factory, while the company continues to close down Canadian ones. That is rather suspect.

I must say that I share the opinion of the workers and the committee that was put in place. They feel that the manufacturing facility should reopen and continue with the same activities or that we should go with plan B and transform the facility so that it can be used for another type of manufacturing.

Anything is possible. The expertise of the workers is one of the many strengths that would lead to the successful completion of this project. Given the draconian employment insurance measures that are having a direct impact on our corner of the country, we all want this facility to reopen. We all want the facility to be up and running again, and we all hope, of course, that the workers will be able to continue to have a decent standard of living.

However, is that what the current government really wants? The government has not done anything, has not provided any help to these people who have been working so hard to find a solution to the closure of this facility. It is also important to note that meetings are planned with General Cable executives to discuss the acquisition of the facility in La Malbaie and its equipment.

Adjournment Proceedings

As Sylvain Tremblay, the reeve and a member of the committee, said, could the government not intervene in these discussions with the company and actively participate in helping the plant to reopen, which is what workers want? There are a number of possible solutions, but unfortunately, this government is once again not doing anything.

I imagine things would be quite different if we were talking about friends of the Conservatives today. No doubt the government would provide immediate assistance. In the most recent Conservative budget, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Infrastructure bragged about an emergency fund.

In my region, 60 people are waiting for help from the government. That is an emergency. Will the Conservatives one day realize that entire regions are in a state of emergency every day?

Before I close, I would like to make one more point. The closure of the manufacturing facility in my region is not an isolated incident. I think it is insulting to the people in my riding to say that this plant closure is an isolated incident.

•(1845)

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for his interest in the economic development of his region.

Our government is aware of the challenges faced by Quebec regions. That is why we are implementing concrete solutions tailored to the needs of businesses and regions across Canada.

My colleague's question gives me an opportunity to remind him that the mandate of Canada Economic Development is to support the long-term economic development of Quebec's regions.

Our approach is tailored to the challenges faced by businesses and the regions and builds on their strengths so that they can fully participate in the economy.

Our efforts are focused in part on supporting manufacturers, including those in Charlevoix, so that they are more innovative and competitive. We also support communities in their efforts to diversify their economies. My colleague's question provides me with an opportunity to point out the direct and tangible impact of our government's investments over the past year. In 2012-13, our government, through Canada Economic Development, invested \$248 million in Quebec businesses and communities to support their development. Every dollar spent generated \$2.34 in investment.

Of course we continue to be present on the ground and to care about the economic development and vitality of communities, including Charlevoix.

My colleague will agree that the Charlevoix-Est RCM has also benefited from Canada Economic Development programs and initiatives. Since 2006, more than \$4 million has been allocated to various projects in the Charlevoix-Est RCM. This has generated total

investments of more than \$11 million. That is what it means to be present on the ground and to make a real difference.

Canada Economic Development's actions are aligned with the Government of Canada's priorities, which are jobs and the economy.

I want to remind the hon. member that during the economic recovery, the Canadian economy has had one of the best performances among the G7 countries.

Our government stands out in a positive way in terms of production and job creation. Since 2009, the number of jobs in Canada has increased by more than one million. That is the strongest growth in the G7.

What is more, in economic action plan 2014, we confirmed the implementation of the building Canada plan with \$53 billion in investments across Canada over 10 years.

This is the largest long-term federal infrastructure commitment in the history of Canada.

These investments create jobs and promote economic growth in all the cities and communities in the country.

I want to assure my colleague that Canada Economic Development will continue to support the economic growth of all the regions in Quebec, including Charlevoix.

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, does the government intend to do something about the General Cable manufacturing facility in La Malbaie, whether it is to provide funding or support or to hold discussions with company executives to help the workers reopen the plant?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, since my party took office, Canada Economic Development has always supported economic growth in all regions of Quebec. It will continue to do so. That is part of its mandate.

I would like to share with my colleague an overview of what Canada Economic Development has achieved since 2006. It has supported 4,575 projects and provided \$2 billion in contributions, with a total of \$8 billion in planned investments.

The companies that we supported said that 38,000 jobs have been created and 31,000 others have been maintained as a result of the initiatives and action taken by Canada Economic Development.

We will continue to work in partnership with Quebec companies, including those in Charlevoix. We will also continue to work with representatives of local organizations, other federal departments and the Government of Quebec to diversify the economy of Charlevoix.

•(1850)

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

(The House adjourned at 6:50 p.m.)

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