



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 145 • NUMBER 083 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, October 20, 2010

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 20, 2010

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

● (1400)

[English]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

MINOR HOCKEY

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Doug Novak from Kenora.

For the past 21 years, Doug has coached Pee Wee hockey, teaching kids how to play Canada's game and giving them important transferrable skills like team playing and leadership along the way. Philadelphia Flyer team captain Mike Richards is but one example.

Doug lives and breathes hockey. He never thinks twice about volunteering countless hours of his time to Kenora minor hockey.

Recently, in the RBC's annual local hockey leaders program, Doug was one of 14 people chosen from hundreds of nominations for his volunteer service and dedication to the sport of hockey. A photo of Doug was unveiled in a permanent display honouring Canada's unsung hockey heroes at the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto, and \$10,000 will be donated to Kenora minor hockey in Doug's name.

I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Doug for his many years of service and commitment to families and minor hockey in Kenora. Doug is just another example of what is so great about the great Kenora riding.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Pacific gateway project was introduced under the previous Liberal government, my constituents of Newton—North Delta were

relieved that truck and container traffic would no longer clog their community.

Now I have learned that the South Fraser Perimeter Road is short on funding. A first-class freeway is now being downgraded to a highway with an unsafe level of traffic lights. The upgrades were supposed to stop trucks idling at intersections. Local governments are calling this plan a recipe for disaster.

I urge the government to commit to the residents of Delta proper funding for this project to allow for a safe, efficient and environmentally friendly flow of traffic.

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● (1405)

[Translation]

JACQUES MASSON

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in September, Jacques Masson announced that he was stepping down as president of the Union des producteurs agricoles de Coaticook after 32 years of involvement.

As the Bloc Québécois deputy critic for agriculture and agri-food, I would like to highlight his commitment to farmers in the region. His dedication helped keep the Union des producteurs agricoles de Coaticook financially healthy, and allowed the organization to work on a number of important issues.

For example, the Union des producteurs agricoles de Coaticook got involved in the issue of access to high-speed Internet in rural areas and in an environmental project to plant trees to protect fields and waterways, for which the organization won the Jean-Paul Raymond award last year.

I wish Mr. Masson and his family the best of luck in sustaining their farm.

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[English]

SPIRIT DAY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am wearing purple because it is Spirit Day. New Democrats stand in solidarity with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and transsexual youth to honour those youth who recently committed suicide due to bullying and harassment.

Statements by Members

Some of the Canadian and American youth we remember are: Tyler Clementi, Seth Walsh, Justin Aaberg, Raymond Chase, Asher Brown, Cody J. Barker, Harrison Chase Brown, Caleb Nolt, Billy Lucas, Jeanine Blanchette and Chantal Dube.

We must act now to end bullying and discrimination against GLBTT youth and stand in solidarity with them, their friends and their families.

I would like to acknowledge an organization in my riding that has been a supporter of the GLBTT community since day one, Sudbury Pride. It is important to stand in solidarity with GLBTT youth and recognize the work of organizations like Sudbury Pride and the steps they take to ensure that GLBTT youth know that life gets better.

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RESPONSIBLE CARE

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada on the 25th anniversary of Responsible Care.

Responsible Care was launched in 1975 to address the chemistry industry's concerns for the environment and the health of Canadians.

Twenty-five years later, the Canadian Responsible Care model has been adopted by more than 50 countries around the world and has been recognized by the United Nations Environment Programme for its contributions to sustainable development.

Responsible Care companies have made great strides in reducing emissions and report their progress in a transparent way to the public each year. In my riding of Sarnia—Lambton, member companies of the CAER program have also been on the forefront of emergency response.

I would like to congratulate members of the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada for showing a quarter century of environmental leadership through Responsible Care.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government wasted \$1.2 billion on the G8 and G20 meetings held in Canada. That money was spent recklessly. For example, the government built a fake lake and many other completely useless things. It also impacted the lives of thousands of Torontonians. This government is incapable of managing a nation's economy.

[English]

My constituents believe that a better way to spend money, create jobs and help the environment would be to invest in the extension of the overburdened and incomplete rail system that serves the vast majority of Torontonians.

Why does the government shy away from funding projects that will create jobs and have a lasting benefit to hundreds of thousands of Canadians instead of wasting taxpayer dollars?

CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Ted Menzies (Macleod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce that the Government of Canada and the Tim Horton Children's Foundation celebrated a significant charitable donation made on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen.

A total of \$300,000 was contributed to three separate charities, focusing on supporting youth, families and Canadian military personnel. One hundred thousand dollars of this donation will go toward expanding the horsemanship program at the Tim Horton Children's Ranch in the beautiful Kananaskis Valley in the riding of Macleod. This 150 acre ranch provides children from all over the country with the unique experience of living in the Rockies and enjoying many outdoor activities.

These donations are an acknowledgement of each charity's hard work and selfless service in promoting the well-being of Canadians and will help build stronger families and provide a better future for Canadians.

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● (1410)

[Translation]

CONTAMINATED WATER IN SHANNON

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has never acknowledged its responsibility for contaminated water in Shannon, nor has it compensated the victims. It has employed all kinds of delay tactics and unusual procedures in order to hinder legal action taken by the victims. In particular, it has attempted to prevent a class action lawsuit and force each plaintiff to file an individual suit against the Department of National Defence. At present, the federal government is again holding up their case by not providing documents that they need to prepare their suit and imposing unreasonable fees for providing them.

If his government is not responsible for the environmental and human disaster in Shannon, as he claims, what does the defence department have to hide? If he is not willing to acknowledge the harm caused by the department and compensate the victims, he should at least demonstrate good faith, transparency and justice and provide the victims' lawyer with the documents requested.

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[English]

HUMAN SMUGGLING

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, human smuggling is a despicable crime and any attempts to abuse Canada's generosity for financial gain is utterly unacceptable. Our government will crack down on human smugglers and those who seek to abuse our immigration system. We will not allow human smugglers to dock their boats on our shores with impunity.

We will send a message that Canada opens its doors to those who work hard and play by the rules, while cracking down on those who seek to take advantage of our generosity and abuse our fair and welcoming immigration system.

Statements by Members

I would encourage members from all parties to recognize the problem posed by human smugglers and recognize it is growing and must be stopped.

Our government will take action and stand up for those immigrants who work hard and play by the rules for the opportunity to live, work and raise a family in our great country.

* * *

YORK LIONS CLUB

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am certain that members of the House can attest to the incredible contribution that service clubs make to community life in their ridings.

In my community of York South—Weston, the York Lions Club is celebrating its 75th anniversary. Like many clubs in both rural and urban areas, under the mantra of “we serve”, the York Lions Club has made life better for youth, seniors and the disadvantaged.

Milestones in the 75 years of the York Lions Club include: the winning of the North America drum and bugle championships under the direction of the late Lion, Doug Saunders; the York Lions Steel Band under the direction of Lions Mike and Gail Stacey; and the ongoing support for the leader dog program to assist the visually impaired.

Lions Clubs throughout our country have contributed to hospitals, community centres and arenas and through their service have served as an inspiration for generations of Canadians. I know members of the House will join with me in celebrating and saluting Lions International and the York Lions Club on achieving 75 years of dedication to its motto “we serve”.

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[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government will not stand idly by while Canada becomes a target for criminals aiming to profit from this country's generosity.

Canada is proud to be an open and generous society. Each year, we welcome hundreds of thousands of immigrants from around the world. These people work hard and play by the rules in order to live, make a living and raise their families in our beautiful country.

Unfortunately, our immigration system is the target of human smugglers who treat our country like a doormat to wipe their feet on. We need to fix this problem once and for all because it continues to grow.

Yesterday, our Conservative government informed Parliament of its intention to introduce a law that would keep human smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system. I encourage members from all parties to acknowledge the fact that the problem of human smuggling is growing and needs to be stopped.

[*English*]

JULIE MASON

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the NDP caucus and staff, past and present, to express sadness and grief for the loss of a great friend and colleague, Julie Mason.

As the former director of communications and then as the chief of staff to NDP leader Alexa McDonough, Julie was innovative, strategic and fierce. She always brought her commitment to social justice to every aspect of her work. Julie was a role model for women as one of the few top female political players at a time when that was difficult and rare.

Whether it was her work on Parliament Hill, or with Oxfam Canada and the Children's Bridge Foundation, or her insightful and refreshingly clear writings on living with cancer, Julie's contributions have made a positive and lasting mark.

We send our love and gratitude for sharing so much of Julie with us to Don McGregor, Julie's husband, and her sons, Glen and Brian, her family and her grandchildren whom she loved so much.

The NDP is forever thankful for the commitment and generosity of Julie Mason and the life she lived to the fullest.

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● (1415)

TRADE

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is always working to expand opportunities for Canadian farmers.

Our government's free trade agenda includes talks with close to 50 countries, in addition to the eight countries with which we have already signed trade agreements. We are also working to improve the mere three trade agreements signed under the previous government.

Our top trade initiative is our negotiations with the European Union which are progressing very well. Canadian farmers are speaking up in support of a deal with the EU.

The Canadian Cattlemen's Association has said that an agreement could be the biggest single opportunity for the Canadian cattle and beef industry since the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement.

The Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance said that opening the European market for Canadian agriculture and food products is critical.

It is clear that only the Conservative government can be counted on to support free trade and open markets for Canadian workers, businesses and farmers. We are getting this done for Canadians, opening jobs and creating hope and opportunity for all Canadians.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CENSUS

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today the OECD is celebrating United Nations World Statistics Day. The event serves as a reminder that government officials need good data to make informed, evidence-based decisions.

The Conservatives' decision to scrap the mandatory long form census is sabotaging its scientific nature and distorting the truth so they can manipulate it to suit their reality. They are playing up the threat of jail time for people who do not fill out the census form. Yet all opposition parties agree that that measure should be eliminated. It is important to note that no one has ever received jail time since the census became mandatory.

Over 300 organizations and municipalities, including the City of Gatineau, oppose the Conservatives' unscientific approach that will deprive them of statistics essential to the well-being of their citizens.

This dogmatic Conservative government needs to listen to reason and reinstate the mandatory long form census once and for all.

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[English]

SENIORS

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken with many seniors who face the difficult choice of having food to eat or the medication they need, and seniors who spend their days in the mall keeping warm because they cannot afford to heat their homes.

Last week I learned of a 93-year-old being evicted from her apartment that she has lived in for decades so the landlord could raise the rent. I spoke with a senior recently who received an increase in his old age security, the first since 2008, and it was just \$1.55 a month.

The seniors resource centre in my riding cannot fund its operations. It cut the grocery bus, Friday friendship and other programs.

[Translation]

Today may be World Statistics Day, but here in Canada, the Conservatives have decided to eliminate the long form census, which means less information about our struggling seniors and the services they need.

[English]

The government has to act now to help seniors. They built our country. Now the country needs to be there for them.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we heard more praise for Canada's principled foreign policy.

Today's *Wall Street Journal* praises the foreign policy positions taken by our government under the Prime Minister. The *Wall Street Journal* states that under the leadership of our Prime Minister:

Canada has avoided the worst of the global recession and emerged with a vibrant banking system and strong currency (now trading near parity to the U.S. dollar).

It also states:

The courage of its soldiers in Afghanistan, and in other missions, is testament to a nation that honors its commitments.

We agree with the *Wall Street Journal* and we make no apologies for our principled decisions. In fact, we have said all along that we are proud of our principled foreign policy positions.

Our government makes policy decisions based on what is right, not on what is popular, and we will continue to do so.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Monday at Our Lady of Lourdes high school in Guelph, a young student named Diane asked me a question, "We are caring for my grandmother at home. If elected, what would you do to help people who are caring for the sick and elderly at home?" I replied to Diane, "Our answer is the family care plan". The Conservatives' answer is, "Use your vacation time".

How can the Prime Minister justify tax breaks for profitable corporations instead of helping families like Diane's?

● (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the real question of course is why the leader of the Liberal Party thinks he can pull off, for the fifth time, a promise which his party has broken four previous times to the Canadian public, which is of course his home care plan, part of the \$75 billion in promises the Liberals have made for the next election campaign.

The Liberals cannot justify it by then turning around and saying they will pay for it all by raising taxes on the Canadian economy during a recession. As economists across the country have said, that is a recipe for disaster. High taxes, high spending; that is why we must make sure the Liberal coalition does not get into office.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is saying it can afford \$6 billion in tax cuts for corporations and it cannot help Diane's family. That is what it amounts to. The elastic on that Canadian family is stretched tight. They owe \$1.47 for every dollar they earn. They need help. They need help with family care and daycare. They need help.

Instead of getting care from this government, instead of getting help, it is giving a tax break to corporations. How does it justify this set of priorities to those hard-pressed Canadian families?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what this government says of course is that we have brought in tax reductions across the board for families, for consumers, and yes, for business as well, in order to strengthen the Canadian economy. That is one of the reasons we have one of the strongest economies in the developed world.

When we make promises to Canadians, we deliver them. We do not cut health care. We do not cut education. We do not cut employment insurance. And we do not raise taxes like the Liberals did.

[Translation]

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, instead of offering to help Canadian families who are suffering and tightening their belts, the government is prepared to give a \$6 billion gift to already-profitable corporations.

How does the government explain its choices to hard-pressed Canadian families?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that corporate tax rates were set a long time ago. Now the Liberal Party is proposing to increase taxes for this country's major employers. The vice-president of the Montreal Economic Institute said that one of the measures proposed by the official opposition, increasing taxes for major employers, will be disastrous for Canadian workers and the economic recovery.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for months the government has been saying, "Don't worry, be happy. Middle class families do not need any support; they can just fend for themselves". But yesterday and today, the Bank of Canada shot the government's story full of holes. In fact, the Canadian economy has just suffered its worst quarter in months and faces serious risks from a global currency war to massive household debt.

The government's numbers about recovery are a fiction. How will the minister reconcile his hocus-pocus with hard facts from the Bank of Canada?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact the forecasts of the Bank of Canada mirror very closely those of the government, because our forecasts are based on private sector analysis, but not the Bank of Canada.

There is not a single credible economic voice in the country that is backing the advocacy of higher tax rates that the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Party are proposing.

* * *

POTASH INDUSTRY

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just repeating the falsehood does not make it true. The proposed takeover of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan amounts to the takeover of the entire Canadian industry. It is the biggest proposed resource takeover ever, and many people in Saskatchewan and

beyond, including prominent business leaders, are asking: After potash is gone, what is left?

Even the former chairman of BHP said, "Canada has already been reduced to an industry 'branch office' and is largely irrelevant on the global mining stage".

Will the government stop the bleeding and just say no?

● (1425)

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously, we are examining the bid, as we are required to do under the Investment Canada Act. We will render a decision that is of net benefit to Canada one way or the other.

However, I would put our record against the record of the opposition Liberals any day of the week. When they were in power, they approved every single bid. When they were in power, they did not go to court to enforce the Investment Canada Act at all.

We turned down a bid and we have gone to court to enforce the Investment Canada Act because we are standing up for Canadians. We are here for Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, every day brings new information about how the Department of Public Works manages contracts. The latest news is that Cameron Forbes, a contractor from Markham, Ontario, made a \$500 donation at the cocktail fundraiser in Bourassa that the Minister of Public Works attended. Mr. Forbes heads a firm that specializes in repairing copper roofs and has won several contracts from the Department of Public Works.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources, who was the minister of public works, tell us what the connection is between a contractor from Markham, Ontario, and the riding of Bourassa in Montreal?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has established very strict rules for donations to political parties. Companies are prohibited from donating money to political parties. The same rules apply to unions and individuals, who cannot donate large sums of money. People can and do donate modest amounts to all political parties, including the Bloc. To suggest that someone can influence a contract with such an amount is ridiculous.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what is ridiculous is deciding what is right and wrong based on the size of the donation. Following this cocktail party, Mr. Forbes' company qualified to be on a shortlist of prequalified bidders from which the Department of Public Works will choose over the next five years when it needs work done.

Oral Questions

Will the Minister of Natural Resources admit that a donation to his party can be an excellent investment for a contractor? This is the seventh example from the same cocktail party.

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have news for our friends in the Bloc Québécois. One of the people who attended the cocktail party, Nicola Papiccio, signed a \$500 cheque for whose election campaign? It was for the election campaign of the member for Saint-Jean, the Bloc critic. Just five months after receiving \$500, the member wrote an official letter to the Department of National Defence asking for financial support for whose company? Mr. Papiccio's. How shocking.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at least seven business owners involved in constructing government buildings funded the Conservative Party in Bourassa in January 2009. Sauv , Glouberman, Gersovitz, Broccolini, Canac-Marquis, Clavier and Forbes worked for Public Works Canada and they alone contributed \$4,000 to the Conservative Party.

Does the Prime Minister, who says that he cannot be bought for \$500, acknowledge that a whole lot of \$500 contributions from government contractors add up to a tidy sum to fund his election campaign?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that one of these participants signed a cheque for the election campaign of the Bloc's official spokesperson. Then, just five months later, he received an endorsement for an application for a hefty grant from the Department of National Defence for one of his businesses. I should ask the same question of the Bloc. Can a Bloc member be bought for a mere \$500?

• (1430)

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the Bloc Qu b cois's initiative, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates will investigate political contributions made to the Conservative Party by companies involved in the construction and renovation of federal buildings.

The Minister of Natural Resources, who is at the centre of this story, has been invited to testify.

He has claimed to be fully accountable, to the point of testifying in place of his assistants. Will he explain himself before the committee?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have nothing to hide. The real question is this: will Nicola Papiccio be invited to this same committee so that the members can ask him what he did with his grants? He made a \$500 donation to the official spokesperson in order to get an endorsement for a hefty grant for one of his businesses. That is the real question.

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[English]

POTASH INDUSTRY

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is turning thumbs down on the BHP takeover of Potash and yet this place is still swarming with lobbyists who clearly have the ear of the government. The question is whether the

Conservatives are finally going to take seriously this whole matter of the net benefit test that the law says they are supposed to apply.

Do members know that only 11 people are responsible in Investment Canada, two of them are clerks, for the review of all the takeovers that come in? Clearly, they cannot get the job done.

Will the government finally take the issue seriously and take the steps that are required, or is it going to continue to side with the lobbyists for BHP and let this investment go ahead, which would be the wrong thing to do?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as is required by law, the government will listen to all sides on the matter. The government will render a decision according to whether the transaction is a net benefit to Canada.

As members know, this is a proposal for an American controlled company to be taken over by an Australian controlled company. We will review the matter according to the act.

[Translation]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, foreign takeovers are not taken seriously by this government. That is clear.

The government's review panel is made up of only 11 people.

Eleven people to examine complex files like the purchase of Inco by Vale, Xstrata by Falconbridge, and now Potash by BHP.

How can we believe that the Prime Minister is serious and is truly looking out for public interest, when we know what happened to the workers of Inco, Vale and others?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has indicated, and as I have indicated on many occasions, there is a law in place. It is called the Investment Canada Act. There is a test that is applied; it is called the net benefit to Canada test. We will be employing that law and that test to consider the situation.

The hon. member may have his opinions, but they are only opinions. We will obviously look at the facts and look at the bidder's considerations, the province's considerations, all of the considerations, in order to render an opinion that will be the best benefit to Canada and the best benefit under the act as well.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, representatives of the people of Saskatchewan, who own the resource, have their opinions and they need to be listened to here.

Nortel is another example of the Conservatives' bankrupt approach to dealing with foreign takeovers. Let us look at what happened here. The Conservatives stood by and fiddled while the competitors carved up this leader in technology, a jewel of the Canadian economy that was very strategic. They watched as workers on medical leave were cast aside. They stood back as workers lost their pensions. They did absolutely nothing and pensioners' rights were dismissed. Today there is nothing left but empty buildings. So what did the government do? It bought the empty buildings.

From strategic leader to empty buildings and real estate agents, is that what the government is all—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Industry.

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the company went bankrupt and was liquidated. The hon. member is correct in that sense. All of the rest of what he says about what happened in the ensuing months is not exactly accurate.

A lot of companies have come in and hired Canadian workers, are investing in Canadian technology, and are part of the Canadian fabric of research, innovation and development. The hon. member should know there are a lot of successful Canadian companies in the information, communication and technology space. We are leaders in the world. One only has to look at Open Text or RIM to acknowledge that.

Why does the hon. member not stand in his place and support Canadian companies rather than doing what he does day in, day out?

* * *

• (1435)

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to a senior Conservative MP, the Prime Minister is responsible for our armed forces being kicked out of the base in Dubai, because his position is, and I quote, “truculent and unreasonable”.

The ambassador for the UAE himself confirmed this version to me.

The government has repeatedly cancelled meetings and renege on its commitments. Why are the Conservatives treating a Canadian ally like this?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this House has heard any number of times this week, the Government of Canada always chooses arrangements that are in the best interest of Canada and of best value to Canadians.

Let me just say again, what the UAE was offering was not in the best interest of Canada

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a Conservative MP has been quoted as saying that the Prime Minister made his UAE decision in a “fit of pique”. The result was not only bad militarily but also economically.

Oral Questions

This very week the Premier of Nova Scotia is in the UAE to negotiate a deal on environmental technology while Research In Motion is also there. Yes, they were allowed to land, but does the Prime Minister not realize that his “fit of pique” is putting Canadian jobs at risk?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government will not respond to unattributable gossip.

Let me say again, what the UAE was offering was not in the best interest of Canada.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the government posted the first report in Canada on ecosystem health on an obscure website, without notifying the public or the media.

After reviewing the report, we know why: 80% of the indicators in this report prepared for the UN conference show signs of trouble.

Today, will the minister reveal to Canadians what positions Canada will take at this conference? Furthermore, where is he hiding them?

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member well knows that this government is a world leader in biodiversity. Canada was instrumental in drafting the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. We were the first industrialized country to ratify that convention and we hosted its international secretariat in Montreal. We have a proud history of biodiversity with this government, not with the Liberals.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the factors the hon. member mentions make it even more embarrassing. From biodiversity to oil sands, the government is sullyng Canada's international reputation. A few weeks ago it was James Cameron, today it is leading environmental groups, on the new report, reminding Canadians how the government is failing them on the oil sands.

By abdicating its responsibilities in Alberta, the government is giving Canada a black eye internationally. Canada's negotiators have received no mandate for the conference on biodiversity.

Will the minister and the government not agree that Canada needs a new doctrine from the government: the responsibility to do no further harm to Canada's reputation?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is it was the Liberal leader that said the Liberals did not get it done.

Oral Questions

Our government is committed to make sure that the oil sands are developed in an environmentally responsible way. The minister created a federal panel of Canada's leading scientists on water monitoring chaired by Dr. Elizabeth Dowdeswell. The panel will report back to the minister before the end of the year on whether or not the current monitoring systems are adequate.

When it comes to the oil sands or the environment, we are getting it done.

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[Translation]

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government took control of Rights & Democracy on the pretext that it was poorly managed.

By refusing to release the forensic management audit of the previous administration and by refusing to seriously address the report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, is the minister not confirming that the financial issue was only a pretext to impose an ideological shift on Rights & Democracy?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this House well knows, Rights & Democracy is an arm's-length organization.

The Deloitte & Touche audit was requested by Rights & Democracy and it has recently delivered the final report. That report is under review by both the president and the board.

* * *

• (1440)

[Translation]

**OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR INTEGRITY
COMMISSIONER OF CANADA**

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada is paralyzed. The federal organization responsible for investigating allegations of wrongdoing in the public service has not identified any abuses in the public sector in three years. How can that be, particularly since very few investigations have been undertaken? The Auditor General, concerned by this state of affairs, is investigating.

Will the government admit that the current commissioner was chosen precisely for her ability to suppress allegations of wrongdoing?

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is true that the Auditor General has received complaints about the organization mentioned. She has started an investigation, and we will wait for the results.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are starting to understand why the government is refusing to ratify the Cartagena protocol on biosafety. The first report on Canadian biodiversity paints a disastrous picture of the state of the ecosystems in 2010. The government is so ashamed of its record that the report was quietly released on Environment Canada's website on a Friday. The government is making all the wrong moves on the world stage when it comes to the environment.

Does the government understand now why it did not get a seat on the Security Council?

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member knows what he said is not true. He also knows that Canada is not a party to the Cartagena protocol. As a non-party, Canada is not in a position to, nor would it be expected to, sign or ratify the supplementary protocol. Even though Canada is a non-party, we ensure the protection of biological diversity by having a strong regulatory framework for living modified organisms.

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is not the only one making all the wrong moves when it comes to the environment. Canadian mining companies have also been singled out by MiningWatch Canada. According to this organization, one-third of the mining companies involved in problems related to environmental degradation and human rights violations in the mining industry are Canadian.

The government has an obligation to regulate the operations of these companies. Will it do so, or will it continue to let them destroy the environment and violate fundamental human rights?

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a proud record on biodiversity in Canada. We have taken action to protect more than 100 million hectares of land, nearly 10% of Canada's land mass and three million hectares of ocean. We will continue to do the good work on the environment. The Bloc needs to remember, it was the Bloc's coalition partners that created the mess on the environment, according to the Liberal leader.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister fired his Minister for Status of Women without even giving her a chance to explain herself. However, he keeps supporting the Minister of Natural Resources even though he is being investigated by the Ethics Commissioner, the Information Commissioner and the Lobbying Commissioner. His former department is being investigated by the RCMP.

Why get rid of a female minister so cavalierly yet tolerate the intolerable from a male minister? Why is there a double standard?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely ridiculous. Let us look at the facts. The Minister of Natural Resources, throughout his time in politics, has always conducted himself with great integrity. He is an outstanding constituency representative, a strong voice for Quebec, and a great public servant for Canada.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister received an erroneous tip from a discredited gumshoe, he kicked the former status of women minister out of cabinet and out of caucus permanently, yet he turns a blind eye while the former minister of public works is under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner, the Information Commissioner, and the Commissioner of Lobbying. And the RCMP is investigating that same department. He threw his women's minister under the bus, but will not do the same with his male Quebec lieutenant. Why the double standard?

● (1445)

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it would be funny if it were not so sad. When we look at the outrageous comments made by so many of the members in the Liberal Party about the former minister for the status of women, we wonder how they can even get up and ask such a question.

* * *

G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after four months of scrambling to bury \$1 billion in summit spending, the government has a new excuse for hiding the cost: it is still waiting for the bill. The minister even said, “We actually wait for the bills to come in before we determine what the costs are”.

So let us get this straight. The Conservatives hand out blank cheques, send contractors out to go wild, and sit around with fingers crossed, waiting months to find out how much money they have blown. That is like giving Paris Hilton one's credit card and telling her to send the bill when she gets around to it.

To the minister, is this incompetence, or are you in some kind of secret wasting competition we should know about?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the question was directed at you, and I am unaware of any incompetent accusations that you are involved in.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at least that was an honest denial in answering a question.

The government blows through more than a billion in taxpayers' dollars for a weekend photo-op. That is offensive enough, but the government goes even further.

Rather than being sorry for its outrageous waste, it celebrates it. It has its officials call the fake lake with its giant inflatable horses and two-storey jumbotron “a wild success”.

While the government is celebrating its lake-making skills, does it realize how many Canadians are struggling and without work, how many are worried how they will pay for heat this winter? Can the minister tell these Canadians how proud he is of his fake lake?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are proud of our accomplishments at the G8 and G20 summits.

Canada is leading the global economic recovery as well as international efforts to aid developing countries.

Our government is focused on ensuring that Canadians have jobs, and that we meet our international responsibilities. In this way, we are ensuring that we have a vibrant world economy in which Canadians benefit.

That is a member who consistently speaks out against this policy.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal foreign policy proposals have been criticized as gimmicky and bumper-sticker-sounding, while our government has consistently exhibited principled foreign policy praised by many around the world. Even former Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin has praised our leadership on child and maternal health.

Now the *Wall Street Journal* has added its voice to the chorus, stating that under the Prime Minister's leadership, “Canada has avoided the worst of the global recession and...the courage of its soldiers in Afghanistan, and in other missions, is testament to a nation that honors its commitments”.

Can the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs for the Americas please comment on this most recent praise?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are proud of our principled foreign policy positions.

Our record on the world stage is clear. We have doubled aid to Africa. Canada has made tremendous sacrifices in Afghanistan. Canada has led the way on child and maternal health. We are proud of Canada's support and friendship with democratic Israel.

Our government makes foreign policy decisions based on what is right and the principles Canadians hold dear. Those positions may not always be popular with some members of the UN, but we will not apologize for doing what is right.

* * *

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, and I want her to pay close attention to this.

Oral Questions

We have learned that her predecessor Michael Fortier apparently manipulated the request for proposals on the largest real estate government deal in decades. If true, this is a violation of government rules. He ensured that the contract went to two banks, not one. The deal generated \$12 million and the former minister is currently working for one of those banks.

Will the minister conduct a forensic audit of this contract to ensure accountability to Canadians?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that what he is speaking about is not based in fact, but I will get back to him with more details if he needs them.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it gets worse. The key players in the deal had close connections to the Conservative Party and Mr. Fortier himself.

Rick Byers was a Tory candidate and Michael Norris was a bagman for a leadership candidate in the Conservative Party.

I am sure even the Prime Minister agrees that if it walks like a conflict of interest, and it quacks like a conflict of interest, then a forensic audit is necessary. Will the minister suspend the planned sale of public assets until a study and oversight of this deal is done?

• (1450)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former minister always conducted himself according to the highest of ethical standards, and I am sure that he followed all government contracting regulations.

Again, I am happy to get back to the member with further details.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TAXATION

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the recovery of undeclared income hidden by Canadians in Swiss bank accounts is picking up speed. Recovering the money is all well and good, but charges need to be brought against these tax evaders.

Will the Minister of National Revenue be satisfied with merely recovering the money owing in taxes, or will he also commit to laying criminal charges against anyone who uses foreign bank accounts to avoid paying taxes here?

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government knows that the majority of Canadians pay their taxes, but there are some who are intent on investing or placing their money in foreign countries. Our government is taking aggressive action to recover money owed to honest, hard-working Canadians. Just last year, over \$1 billion was recovered in unpaid taxes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of Finance is announcing a record deficit, there are fears that this government will sacrifice justice and not bother recovering millions of dollars in much needed revenue. Someone who is caught stealing a litre of milk from a corner store has to pay for it and face criminal charges. The same should apply to white collar criminals.

Can the government assure us that anyone who uses foreign bank accounts to evade taxes will face criminal charges?

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, our government is taking aggressive action and over \$1 billion was recovered in unpaid taxes. Those unpaid taxes are subject to penalties.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CENSUS

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives want to spend \$30 million more for a lower-quality census.

The data will be based on a response rate of about 50%, which is a far cry from the previous rate of 94%. We can imagine the consequences.

The Prime Minister's anti-scientific action is even being condemned by the union representing government scientists.

Why abolish the long form census? Is it to bury the government's lousy socio-economic record over the past five years?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Not at all, Mr. Speaker. We support a voluntary questionnaire to protect Canadians' rights.

[*English*]

We understand that we can get useful data from a national household survey, which will be going to 4.5 million households. We can do this in a way that balances the privacy rights of individuals, allowing them to choose not to answer intrusive questions, with the need to collect data for Canadians.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the United Nations' first World Statistics Day. Sadly, unlike the rest of the world, Canada's Conservatives are attacking statistics instead of celebrating international progress.

Elimination of the long form census would reduce the response rate from 94% to a paltry 50%. This wasteful decision would add \$30 million to the deficit, and it will cost provinces and municipalities millions more, because they will lose the ability to target programs to their citizens' needs.

When will Canada lead again and restore the long form census?

Oral Questions

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day, in a world statistics way, when the party of the official opposition is wedded to the idea that it is best to coerce Canadians, to threaten them with jail time or massive fines, if they do not fill out a government form. That may be the official opposition's policy.

We have a fair and reasonable policy, designed to get useful and usable data by covering 4.5 million households. At the same time, our policy protects Canadians from coercion on the part of their government, which has an obligation to represent Canadians' interests. Maybe the opposition is not aware of that, but we sure are on this side of the House.

* * *

●(1455)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a report out today confirms what New Democrats have been telling the current government for years: the Conservatives are ignoring their responsibility to control pollution in the tar sands.

Under both the Liberal and Conservative governments, industry has been given billions of dollars to open up the tar sands, while legal responsibilities to regulate pollution and protect the environment and Canadians' health have been ignored.

Will the Conservatives finally admit that their “hear no evil, see no evil” attitude is bad for the economy and bad for our environment?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the report, like this government, supports developing the oil sands in an environmentally responsible manner. That is why the minister under this government struck a federal panel of Canada's leading scientists and tasked them with ensuring the proper and accurate monitoring of water.

We have also invested in state-of-the-art analytical equipment for chemical fingerprinting, so that we can determine where the toxins are coming from.

When it comes to the environment, the member knows we are getting it done.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member would like to know where the toxins are coming from. They are coming from the tar sands.

What we realize today is that the negligence with respect to this project is only going to get worse. Today's report shows that greenhouse gas emissions from the tar sands are ballooning out of control. By the year 2050, emissions will be 40 times above the government's own pathetically weak targets. Under this nightmare scenario, using carbon capture and storage to make up the difference is going to cost between \$60 billion and \$70 billion.

When will the Conservatives realize that runaway growth in the tar sands will hurt Canada's economy and the environment? When are they going to start doing their jobs?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a shame the member could not attend a tour of the oil sands. It is the oil sands, and it is improving. Because of the Liberals? No, they made a mess of it.

Because of the NDP? No, and not even the Bloc. It is this government that is taking leadership on the environment. The oil sands will be developed in an environmentally responsible way.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the status of women committee, the Leader of the Opposition once again chose show over substance. Members of the committee work long and hard to ensure that women's rights are addressed seriously, respectfully and honestly. Yesterday members of the committee were insulted that the Liberal leader used his private member's bill as an excuse to play politics with women's rights or, as the *National Post* said, “just window-dressing”.

Can the President of the Treasury Board tell the House why we think women deserve better?

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we firmly agree with and support the principle of equal pay for equal work.

The past Liberal government used to force women into court and, in fact, for years forced them to wait for fair compensation. We do not think that is the right way to treat women in these situations, so our Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act allows for these issues to be dealt with right up front, right in the bargaining process.

We do not think women should be forced to wait. We do not know why the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberals want to force them for years to wait for fair compensation.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on September 23 the Prime Minister met Ukrainian President Yanukovich under whom democratic and human rights transgressions are regularly occurring: intimidation of media, restrictions to freedom of assembly, tampering with election rules, secret police even pressuring university rectors to spy on students.

Sadly, the Prime Minister did not make clear that Canada stands united with Ukrainians who demonstrated their will to be a free democratic state during the Orange Revolution. Will he do so on October 25 while meeting with the president in Kyiv?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes. We do have concerns about the encroachment of fundamental democratic freedoms in Ukraine, and yes, the Prime Minister will raise those concerns during his visit.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion calling on the federal government to respect its commitment to pay for 50% of the cost of Highway 175 between Quebec City and Saguenay.

Given the importance of Highway 175 for the economic development of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, will the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities undertake to split 50-50, with the Government of Quebec, the total cost of Highway 175?

• (1500)

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is in black and white. I have a copy of the agreement between the Governments of Canada and Quebec. It states that the respective contribution to the project of Canada and Quebec will be 50% of eligible expenses, up to \$262 million each, for the first phase of the project.

[English]

In fact, we not only committed to this and paid this; we have also funded 50% of phase two of the project. We have not only met the terms of the agreement; we have exceeded them.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, CSIS director Richard Fadden made allegations of foreign influence that tarred thousands of Canadians with unwarranted suspicion and are hurtful to the Chinese Canadian community.

We know that Mr. Fadden was in direct contact with the public safety minister before and after his remarks. Yet the minister is now ducking the public safety committee's request for him to appear and be accountable for his own official statements.

Here is what the government House leader said about appearing at committees: "Ministers are responsible, and I'm here to accept that responsibility". Why will this minister not accept his responsibility, be accountable and explain this unjustified smear?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be at the committee on Monday.

However, I want to indicate that the NDP public safety critic compared the selfless acts of those who helped slaves escape persecution to the criminal human smugglers who prey on individuals, vulnerable individuals, and who only care about profit. That member should be ashamed. That member should apologize.

Human smugglers are clearly targeting Canada and are treating our country like a doormat. The problem is growing and it must be stopped. That member should apologize and assist us.

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TAXATION

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, later today the House will vote on Bill C-290.

The Bloc-NDP-Liberal coalition supported proposal would let businesses that underfund their own employees' pension plans off the hook, and would cost \$10 billion annually for a new scheme to be paid for with higher and higher taxes on Canadians.

These reckless and costly schemes underline why the coalition is bad for our economy. Can the parliamentary secretary please explain the danger of the coalition's tax-and-spend policies?

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc-NDP-Liberal coalition's tax-and-spend policies are economically destructive.

The Liberal-led coalition is targeting job creators and would kill jobs with its tax hike plan. Experts have confirmed that this would kill 253,000 jobs. Manufacturers are worried. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is so worried that it even called the Liberal plan the most "economically destructive" plan possible.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, next year marks 120 years since the first wave of Ukrainian pioneers to Canada. They transformed the bush of the Northwest Territories into the golden wheat fields of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Ten years ago, a state-of-the-art Ukrainian Canadian archives and museum was announced in Edmonton. Individual Canadians, Ukrainian Canadian organizations, the City of Edmonton and Premier Stelmach have all committed generous funding.

There is just one missing partner in the final push to get this done, the federal Conservative government. Why the stonewalling and delays?

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. colleague for his interest and his question.

This is an infrastructure project. The project is being analyzed at the present time. We will make the appropriate announcement in due course.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Richard Fadden, the director of CSIS, has alleged that a number of politicians are under the influence of a foreign government. This unusual statement from a CSIS director has added to the climate of doubt surrounding elected officials. The Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security has invited the minister to come and answer questions about this affair but, even though the minister is joining us on Monday, he refuses to answer this question for no apparent reason.

Is the minister hiding in order to avoid revealing that his government is, in fact, associated with the CSIS director's irresponsible operation to cast doubt on the integrity of elected officials?

• (1505)

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be there on Monday. The member can ask me any question that she likes.

However, we do not comment on operational matters related to CSIS. Mr. Fadden came to committee and answered questions for two hours in respect of that particular issue.

The member is obviously trying to make a political issue out of Mr. Fadden's comments.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF CANADA

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table today the 2009-10 annual report of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the commission for its work.

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EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the Employment Equity Act, chapter 44, section 20, I have the honour to table the annual report of the Employment Equity Act for 2009, in both official languages.

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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 responses to six petitions.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the

House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, concerning its participation at the 21st session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization, at IPU headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, on June 24 and 25.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present today, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, in relation to an extension of 30 sitting days to consider Bill C-474, An Act respecting the Seeds Regulations (analysis of potential harm), referred to the committee on Wednesday, April 14.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a) a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, October 27, 2010, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

[English]

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 eighth report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

In accordance with its order of reference of Thursday, May 13, your committee has considered Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Electricity and Gas Inspection Act and the Weights and Measures Act, and agreed on Tuesday, October 19, to report it with amendments.

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

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Our committee is requesting an extension of 30 sitting days in relation to Bill C-343, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Employment Insurance Act (family leave).

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a), a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, October 27, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

Routine Proceedings

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), this report contains the list of items added to the order of precedence as a result of the replenishment that took place on Friday, October 1, under private members' business, and that should not be designated non-votable.

• (1510)

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), this report is deemed concurred in.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, regarding membership of committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 19th report later today.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in relation to Bill C-465, An Act respecting a National Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Heritage Day.

[*Translation*]

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House, with amendments.

[*English*]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier today, be concurred in.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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NOTICE DURING ADJOURNMENT PERIOD

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent of the House for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding Standing Order 54(2), during adjournment of the House the week of November 8, 2010, that time provided for the filing with the Clerk of any notice be no later than 2 p.m. on Friday, November 12, 2010.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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PETITIONS

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today.

The first petition calls on Parliament to support a particular private member's bill that would prohibit the importation or exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption as well as horse meat products for human consumption.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from constituents in metro Vancouver. It calls on the government to amend the Criminal Code to recognize recurring incidence of violence against public transit, school bus, para transit and intercity transit operators, affecting their safety and that of the travelling public in Canada.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of a petition to support Bill C-544 from over 100 citizens of Alberta.

The petitioners say that horses are usually kept as sport and companion animals. They say that they are not raised for food processing and are given certain drugs that are prohibited from being used by humans.

They call upon the House of Commons and Parliament to bring forward and adopt into legislation bill C-544, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act (slaughter of horses for human consumption), thus prohibiting the importation or exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption, as well as horse meat products for human consumption.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

The first petition is in support of the Stolen Sisters and the need for sufficient funding to continue the important work of protecting women through the Sisters in Spirit initiative and investing in initiatives recommended by the Native Women's Association of Canada to help prevent more women from disappearing.

The petition is signed by hundreds of people. It is quite timely, in light of the working group on murdered and missing women across the country and many of its recommendations.

• (1515)

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in support of Bill C-544. It deals with the fact that horses in our country are ordinarily kept and treated as sport and companion animals and are not raised primarily as food producing animals.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act, thus prohibiting the importation or exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption as well as horse meat products for human consumption.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding is one of the most beautiful in all of Canada, with some of the most productive farmland in the entire country. It is also known as the equestrian capital of Canada. I have been asked by a number of people in my riding to present a petition that would ban the slaughter of horses for human consumption.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting the next in a series of petitions of importance to tens of thousands of Canadians who are afflicted with multiple sclerosis.

The petitioners call on the federal Minister of Health and provincial ministers of health to discuss allowing hospitals, private clinics and individual doctors to test for and treat CCSVI in all Canadians who so desire testing and treatment and to plan and implement a nationwide clinical trial for the evaluation of venography and balloon angioplasty for the treatment of CCSVI in persons diagnosed with MS.

VETERANS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from citizens across many communities and from all walks of life who want Parliament to know that they genuinely support and value the contributions of our veterans and that they regard a veteran as a veteran regardless of which deployment or where an individual may have served.

The petitioners join the Veterans Ombudsman and General Walter Natynczyk in condemning the new Veterans Charter and the Department of Veterans Affairs for creating barriers to serving Canada's veterans.

The petitioners also demand that existing services, such as veterans hospitals, be mandated to serve modern day veterans, including the more than 200,000 members of the armed forces who have served in peacekeeping missions since the Korean War.

The petitioners want a full hearing in the House of Commons in response to the issues of pensions, special care, programs, services and the preservation of an independent Department of Veterans Affairs and that Parliament act to ensure veterans and their families receive the supports that they have been promised and to which they are entitled as members of the armed forces past, present and future.

Routine Proceedings

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I rise on an issue of employment insurance. Many signatories to this petition went through a lot of stress recently because they almost faced the cancellation of the best 14 weeks program and other pilot projects that were so helpful in the region, especially those affected by hurricane Igor.

The petition I present today was put together by the FFAW, the Fish, Food and Allied Workers of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I thank it for doing this. The petition comes from primarily two plants, one being on Fogo Island, the Fogo Island Co-op, and the other being the Beothic Fish Processors Limited in Valleyfield, New-Wes-Valley. The petitioners are mostly from those regions.

I would like to compel the government not only to reconsider a small extension on the best 14 weeks pilot projects, but to consider placing these programs as permanent.

OLD AGE SECURITY

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition. The petitioners note that the current recipients of old age security in Canada have duly contributed to Canadian society for at least 10 years and decreasing the residency requirement for pension eligibility would be a disincentive for new Canadians to work, contribute and integrate into Canadian society.

The petitioners therefore call upon the House of Commons to oppose Bill C-428, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (residency requirement).

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from my riding of Hamilton Centre and surrounding areas regarding support for Bill C-544, which deals with the issue of the exporting and importing of horses for human consumption.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons and Parliament to bring forward and adopt Bill C-544, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act (slaughter of horses for human consumption), thus prohibiting the importation or exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption as well as horse meat products for human consumption.

On behalf of these petitioners, I am proud and pleased to present this petition to the House.

Routine Proceedings

•(1520)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition from a variety of Canadians in communities such as Claresholm, Alberta, Lethbridge, Grantham and Fort Macleod.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to bring forward and adopt Bill C-544, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act (slaughter of horses for human consumption), thus prohibiting the importation and exportation of animals for slaughter for human consumption as well as horse meat products for human consumption.

PASSPORT FEES

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my petition calls on the Canadian government to negotiate with the United States government to reduce the United States and Canadian passport fees. The number of American tourists visiting Canada is at its lowest levels since 1972. It has fallen by 5 million visits in the last 7 years alone, from 16 million in 2002 to only 11 million in 2009.

Passport fees for an American family of four could be over \$500 U.S. While 50% of Canadians have passports, only 25% of American citizens do.

At the recent Midwestern Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments, attended by myself and over 500 other elected representatives from 11 border states and 3 provinces, a unanimous resolution was passed as follows:

RESOLVED, that the...Conference calls on President Barack Obama and [the Canadian] Prime Minister...to immediately examine a reduced fee for passports to facilitate cross-border tourism; and be it further

RESOLVED, that [the Conference] encourage[s] the governments to examine the idea of a limited time two-for-one passport renewal or new application;

To be a fair process, passport fees must be reduced on both sides of the border. Therefore, the petitioners call on the government to work with the American government to examine a mutual reduction in passport fees to facilitate tourism and to promote a limited time two-for-one passport renewal or new application fee on a mutual basis with the United States.

* * *

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 question will be answered today: No. 355.

[Text]

Question No. 355—**Hon. John McCallum:**

With respect to the Canada Revenue Agency, as of June 15, 2010: (a) how many taxpayers has the agency identified as having over-contributed to a Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA) between January 1, 2009 and December 31, 2009; and (b) how much tax revenue has the Agency identified as being owed to the government due to TFSA over-contributions in 2009?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), as of June 15, 2010, it was determined that for calendar year 2009, 72,786 individuals may be in excess contributions, i.e., contributions

over \$5,000. This represents less than 2% of the 4.8 million Canadians who contributed to a tax-free savings account, TFSA.

In response to (b), at this time, the CRA cannot provide the information in the manner requested as it is still in the process of establishing the amounts owed to the government due to TFSA over contributions in 2009.

* * *

[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 Question No. 357 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 357—**Mr. Fin Donnelly:**

With regards to sea lice: (a) what is the current state of sea lice outbreaks in the west coast fisheries; (b) what has been the state of sea lice outbreaks in the west coast fisheries over the past 30 years; (c) what is the current state of sea lice outbreaks in any fishery in any region; (d) in what region was sea lice most prevalent in the past year; (e) in which rivers were sea lice outbreaks most prevalent (i) this year, (ii) over the past four years; (f) in which ports were sea lice outbreaks most prevalent (i) this year, (ii) over the past four years; (g) have any sea lice outbreaks shown resistance to chemical pesticide control (i) in the past year, (ii) in the past 30 years; (h) what, if any, are the recorded instances of sea lice resistance to chemical pesticide control (i) this year, (ii) in any year for which the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has records; (i) what is the effect of sea lice on the Fraser River sockeye salmon run; (j) what causes sea lice outbreaks; and (k) do sea lice outbreaks have an effect on wild salmon populations and, if so, what is that effect?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining question be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-442—ADMISSIBILITY OF AMENDMENTS MADE AT COMMITTEE

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise with respect to the admissibility of three amendments made in committee to Bill C-442, An Act to establish a National Holocaust Monument. The bill, which was reported back to the House with amendments on June 9, 2010, is scheduled to be debated on October 27, 2010.

Before I speak to my substantive points, I want you to know that I and my party and each member of the House wish to see the establishment of a national Holocaust monument in our nation's capital as soon as humanly possible. In bringing this matter to your attention, I am simply seeking to ensure that proper procedure and practice is followed on this important bill and that there are no errors in legislation and indeed in the process.

I seek your ruling that the committee has exceeded its authority and passed amendments that are beyond the principle and scope of the bill as outlined in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition, page 766. To wit:

An amendment to a bill that was referred to a committee after second reading is out of order if it is beyond the scope and principles of the bill.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, the issue of inadmissible amendments being passed in committee and included in the bill as reported has arisen in the House on numerous occasions. In the most recent occurrence, you ruled on May 11, 2010 that the Speaker does not get involved in committee issues except in cases where a committee has exceeded its authority, such as an amendment that is beyond the scope of the bill. In such cases, the Speaker is responsible for ruling on the admissibility of such amendments after the bill has been reported to the House. This is because the motion to refer the bill to committee after second reading establishes the principle and the scope of the bill. As a result, a committee report that is not consistent with that motion must be corrected.

On September 18, 2009, Bill C-442 was introduced by the member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park and was debated at second reading on December 8, 2009. In presenting his private member's bill, the member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park summarized the scope and principle of the bill when he concluded:

This monument is a statement made by Canadians to the world that honours those who died in the tragedy of the Holocaust and says to future generations of Canadians, never again.

Based on this principle, the House of Commons unanimously, and I might add enthusiastically, adopted Bill C-442 at second reading and referred it to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

On May 13, 2010, the committee began a study of the bill at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities where the member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park stated, and I repeat, that the Prime Minister gave his support and approval to the bill as passed in the House.

On May 26, 2010, and again on June 3, 2010, your committee met in public, not in camera, for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. The government presented a total of nine amendments, one for each clause of the bill.

Points of Order

At the meeting on June 3, 2010, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities moved five amendments. In at least three cases the chair ruled the proposed amendments inadmissible. In each case the chair's ruling was appealed by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and the chair was overruled. The amendments were then carried on division.

For clarity's sake, I will read out the specific amendments in question.

On Clause 2, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities moved:

That Bill C-442, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing line 10 on page 2 with the following:

"Minister under section 4 and directed as such by the Minister to form a legal entity in order to properly manage the functions and ensure good governance and accountability of said council."

The chair ruled this amendment inadmissible because it proposed a substantive amendment to the bill by way of a modification to the interpretation clause, as provided on page 769 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition.

On Clause 7, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities moved:

That Bill C-442, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing lines 12 and 13 on page 3 with the following:

(fund rais)ing campaign to cover the cost of planning, designing, constructing, installing and maintaining the Monument, and any other costs incurred by the Council."

● (1525)

The chair ruled this amendment inadmissible because it was beyond the scope of the bill, as provided on page 766 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition.

Further, on clause 8, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities moved:

That Bill C-442, in Clause 8, be amended by replacing lines 14 to 16 on page 3 with the following:

"8. The Minister may delegate to the Council his or her responsibilities under paragraphs 6(a) and (c) and subsection 7(1)."

The chair ruled this amendment inadmissible because it was moved at the wrong place in the bill, as provided on page 768 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition, and also because it was beyond the scope of the bill, as provided on page 766 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition.

In committee, I argued that the government, in bringing nine amendments to the bill, one for each clause, was attempting to rewrite the bill, leaving nothing but the title intact.

A national Holocaust monument in our nation's capital is something that the government can accomplish today, without this legislation. However, since it has chosen the legislative route, it is important that the proper procedures and practices be followed so that the House can be assured that the committee did not overstep its authority and produce legislation beyond its mandate to do so.

Government Orders

It is my view that upon examination, Mr. Speaker, you, too, will find that the amendments proposed by the government are inadmissible and that the bill should be restored in its original form and so reported to this House.

I respectfully seek your ruling on the matter and thank you in anticipation of same.

• (1530)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his intervention.

Let me first say that I find it somewhat amusing that a member of the opposition, a member of the coalition, would stand in this place and complain about members overruling or trying to overturn rulings by the chair when in fact we have seen on many occasions in many committees where the combined coalition would effectively gut a government bill brought forward at committee.

Second, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you from experience I have seen in the procedure and House affairs committee on several occasions members of the coalition overturn or overrule the chairman's rulings, calling for certain elements of a particular bill to be inadmissible.

I would say it is somewhat ironic that we have an intervention from a coalition member saying that there has been untoward practices, in effect, at a committee just because he does not like the results.

What I will say in direct response to his intervention, however, is that I would reserve the right to make a fulsome response once I have a chance to carefully examine today's intervention.

The Speaker: I can hardly wait for the hon. parliamentary secretary's intervention. However, he will bear in mind that the bill is coming up for debate next Wednesday and he will want to make any interventions on this matter promptly so the Chair can make a ruling and deal with the issue. I know I want to hear every word he has to say on the subject as I have listened so attentively to the hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

I thank members for their submissions on this point and I will deal with it in due course.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CANADA-PANAMA FREE TRADE ACT

The House resumed from September 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-46, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Panama, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Panama and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Panama, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be speaking on behalf of the Bloc Québécois about Bill C-46, particularly about the amendment proposed by an NDP member.

To begin with, I would like to say that the Bloc Québécois will support this amendment because it means that debate about the bill will be delayed, potentially killing it. We are against this bill, and we said that during the first debate.

It is important to reiterate that the Bloc Québécois opposes this bill mainly because Panama is a tax haven, a country that promotes tax evasion. It is unbelievable that the Conservative government, supported by the Liberals, wants to conclude an agreement and adopt a bill to implement that agreement with a country that promotes tax evasion, when we have seen over the past two or three weeks that rather significant capital belonging to Canadians had been transferred to the HSBC Bank in Switzerland. In essence, this constitutes a form of tax evasion. The government tells us that it has started recovering some of the money, but it is a double standard. On one hand, it says it wants to recoup this money but it is not going to great lengths to do so, and on the other hand, it wants to conclude a trade agreement with Panama, a country that openly promotes tax evasion and is on the OECD grey list of tax havens.

France, among other countries, has taken very serious measures to fight tax evasion. French parliamentarians believe that this type of tax evasion absolutely must stop. They have taken measures to impose more taxes on companies that want to set up in known tax havens. France has established a black list, which was published in February 2010. It includes a number of Latin American and Asian countries, Anguilla in the Caribbean, Belize in Central America, Brunei in Asia, Costa Rica in Central America, Dominica and Grenada in the Caribbean, Guatemala in Central America, the Cook Islands and the Marshall Islands in Oceania, Liberia in Africa, Montserrat in the Caribbean, Nauru and Niue in Oceania, Panama in Central America, the Philippines in Asia, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean. Panama is clearly on the black list of countries that promote tax evasion.

In Canada, we have a government that wants to promote trade with a country that has been blacklisted by other countries for promoting tax evasion.

We are short on money, and the government says we have a massive deficit. And yet it wants to negotiate and sign agreements with countries that promote tax evasion. These agreements will favour businesses and individuals that invest in these countries in order to pay less in taxes. That makes no sense, and is a complete contradiction.

The Bloc Québécois is not against free trade agreements. On the contrary. We have often said this. The Bloc Québécois was the first party to introduce the idea of an agreement with the European Union. We were in favour of a free trade agreement with the European Union, and these negotiations are now under way. We are absolutely not against trade agreements. Take NAFTA, for example, which Quebec fully supported.

•(1535)

What we are saying is that we must take advantage of the globalization of markets to try to level the playing field with trade regulations, to ensure they are fair for workers in other countries and workers here, for the different companies and for the environment. We must ensure that free trade agreements are not signed at the expense of the people of another country, of their environment or ours. We must look at the measures beforehand, instead of rushing to sign agreements, which only leads to serious repercussions in terms of the environment and labour rights. It is quite possible that these agreements would be better negotiated from a multilateral perspective.

What we are saying is that yes, we must be open to trade, but not just any old way. We believe that in order for trade to be mutually beneficial, it must first be fair. A trading system that results in exploitation in poor countries and dumping in rich countries is not viable. There is a downside, as I just mentioned. The Bloc Québécois will never tolerate a system of free trade that would result in a race to the bottom. We worry that an agreement like the free trade agreement with Panama will result in a race to the bottom.

The absence of environmental or labour standards in trade agreements puts a great deal of pressure on our industries, especially our traditional industries. It is very difficult for them to compete with products made with no regard for basic social rights. The Bloc Québécois believes that child labour, forced labour and the denial of workers' fundamental rights are a form of unfair competition, just like, or even more than, export subsidies and dumping. Prohibition of these practices is widely accepted at the international level, as reflected by the large number of countries that have signed the International Labour Organization's eight fundamental conventions. We must have a way to protect ourselves against such practices. We need an overall vision, a policy geared more to multilateral than bilateral agreements.

Trade agreements and trade laws do not protect our businesses and our workers from this social dumping. If a country wants to benefit from free trade, in return it has to accept a certain number of basic rules, with regard to social rights in particular. Environmental organizations and human rights groups have been concerned about this issue for a long time. More recently, though, it has become a major economic issue. Quebec has proportionally more industries threatened by competition from Asia than the rest of Canada. Quebec is at the forefront of this debate.

In closing, the Bloc Québécois is urging the federal government to revise its positions in trade negotiations in order to ensure that trade agreements include clauses ensuring compliance with international labour standards as well as respect for human rights and the environment. In their current form, side agreements on minimum labour standards and environmental protection lack a binding mechanism that would make them truly effective. The Bloc Québécois believes that if Canada wants to have credibility on this front, it should immediately sign on to the International Labour Organization's fundamental conventions against various forms of discrimination, forced labour and child labour, as well as those in support of the right to organize and collective bargaining.

Government Orders

Once again, we will support the amendment put forward by the NDP so that, ideally, this bill will eventually be withdrawn.

•(1540)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, at the beginning I want to make a *Hansard* correction on behalf of the member regarding Bill C-46 because in his black list of countries with tax haven status he had mentioned the Dominican Republic, but he had meant to say Dominica, so I want to correct that on his behalf.

I think it is very interesting on the difference in approach on the issue of tax havens between France and Germany vis-à-vis the Canadian Prime Minister.

In France, the French government drew up its list of tax haven countries and it was very proactive. It applied taxes against these companies that do business in Panama. It taxed their dividends, service fees, royalties and interest paid.

What does the Canadian government do? Exactly the opposite. It waits until an employee of a Swiss bank turns over bank records to the French government and now we have the Prime Minister going cap in hand to Switzerland to talk to the Swiss finance minister about getting more information from Switzerland.

Revenue Canada has been given the list of these Canadians who have been investing in the tax havens, and guess what Revenue Canada does? It gives them an amnesty. There is a totally different approach. We have a very soft approach whereas the Germans and the French have a very tough approach.

I would like to ask the member—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for asking the question. And he is quite right to suggest the *Hansard* correction regarding what I said earlier. I said the Dominican Republic was on the black list, but I meant to say Dominica. I will make sure that is corrected, right after my speech.

My colleague is quite right. It is very strange that this government is promoting tax evasion by trying to pass this bill to enter into a free trade agreement with a country that is on France's black list and on the OECD's grey list of tax havens.

It is a complete contradiction for the government to say it will address a few of those issues with Switzerland. Why this double standard? We simply do not understand. That is why we completely oppose a free trade agreement with Panama. I mentioned several countries that are on black lists or grey lists, so what country will be next, after Panama?

Government Orders

Does the government have a policy on free trade, or is its policy to encourage as many free trade agreements as possible with tax havens? We cannot help but wonder.

• (1545)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, my follow-up question for the member is this. After France put Panama on the black list, guess what happened? Panama signed a tax avoidance treaty. After Panama signed with France, it now has eight signed agreements.

Where is Canada in all of this? Canada is pushing ahead with a free trade agreement and it is not even one of the eight countries that Panama signed a tax avoidance agreement with.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Madam Speaker, once again, the member is quite right. France is very advanced in that regard and we have to wonder why Canada, which also wants to enter into free trade agreements, is not equally forward thinking. It must be consistent and not invest in tax havens, on the one hand, and not invest in other countries that do the same thing, on the other hand, or enter into free trade agreements with them. It makes no sense.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I am pleased to be speaking about Bill C-46, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Panama, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Panama and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Panama. I am also pleased to be speaking after my colleague from Saint-Maurice—Champlain, who does such excellent work on the Standing Committee on International Trade.

First of all, it is never easy to keep track of the Conservatives because they go off in all directions, which is why they got such a bad grade at the UN. That is part of the problem. They are not focused enough, they cast too wide a net and they are not building a solid base. The result is inevitable. And we can see it in the agreements that this government is signing.

To begin with, I would like to say that the Bloc Québécois does not support Bill C-46 concerning the implementation of a free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Panama.

Yes, Panama is one of the most developed economies in Central America, but the Bloc Québécois cannot ratify a free trade agreement with this country as long as it is on the OECD's grey list of tax havens. This is very important.

We know that the citizens who are listening to us work very hard and pay their taxes. Some of them are retired and continue to pay taxes. We often forget that. The economic situation is not easy, which means that we cannot revitalize our economy. This is the whirlwind that the Conservative Party got sucked into because it decided to forgo a traditional economy. This is a choice that the Conservatives made, notably by not supporting investments and the forestry industry.

In recent budgets, the Conservatives invested more than \$10 billion in the automotive sector, but barely \$200 million in the

forestry industry, which is nevertheless Canada's primary industry. Without forestry, the development and industrialization of the past 50 years would not have taken place. Unfortunately, the decision to not support one segment of our traditional economy forces us to attempt to open markets in other economies. That is what the Conservative Party is trying to do by signing agreements with other countries. In this case, it is Panama. However, this country is on the OECD grey list of tax havens.

The Conservatives' message is that we can do business with tax havens and that we will avoid paying taxes in Canada, all the while hoping that our companies will create jobs here. However, we are increasingly seeing the good jobs leaving Canada, right under the Conservative Party's nose.

We must examine what the Conservatives have been doggedly working on: destroying the traditional economy, including the forestry sector. They have attacked it repeatedly. I am saying this because the forestry crisis started well before the banking crisis of the past two years. The forestry crisis started five years ago and businesses had sounded the alarm well before that.

The Conservatives decided to take other action rather than helping the forestry industry. This inevitably led to lower family income. There are fewer high-quality jobs and this affects our retirees and seniors, who must make an additional effort and continue to pay taxes year after year. There is no possibility of indexing the assistance that could benefit or be available to them, or the very basis for retirement income. The increase in old age security is negligible and does not even pay for a coffee.

• (1550)

The Conservatives decided not to invest to protect our traditional jobs in forestry and other industries, and they are shifting the tax burden to seniors and retirees. This is a choice the Conservatives are making, and the Bloc Québécois is not fooled.

The Conservatives are trying to get good press, with the Liberals' help. We must not forget that the Liberals supported the last two budgets. They let them pass by sitting down and not voting. That is how the Liberals do things. They have no backbone. We know them, and we have known for a long time that that is how they are. They have given moral support to the Conservatives as they shift from a traditional resource-based economy to a capital development economy. They have chosen to have huge mining companies that are going to invest in foreign countries and hire foreign workers.

That is not what the Bloc Québécois would have chosen to do, and it is not what the Bloc Québécois has always stood up for. We want to keep our jobs and our money in Quebec and the rest of Canada. If we can help Canadians by standing up for Quebecers, then so much the better. That is what we do every day in the House. We have to prevent the Conservatives from continuing to damage the traditional economy, and one way to do that is to stand up against this free trade agreement with Panama, a country that is on the OECD grey list of tax havens, as I have said many times.

Government Orders

Today, here in the House of Commons, we were treated to quite a sight during question period: the Bloc Québécois members were asking the minister in charge about the cases of tax evasion involving the HSBC bank that were discovered by the French. Capital was being held in Switzerland and other countries by people from different countries who were evading tax. The government likes to brag about recovering money, but it is dead-set against prison terms for individuals who defraud the people of this country in this way.

That is unacceptable. Our constituents work too hard, or have worked too hard, if they are retired. Yet today we learned in the news that the French discovered that Canadians were evading taxes. We learned this through the news. It took a report from the CBC for this government to wake up. In fact, it had not decided to investigate Canadians who were evading taxes by putting their money in Swiss accounts. The Conservative government realized that it had no political choice, since it is a minority government, and could be defeated any day. As soon as there is a crisis on the horizon, the Conservatives try to put out the fire. That is what they did by trying to recover the money, but they forgot that tax evasion by a citizen is a violation of the Criminal Code.

Someone who is accused of stealing a litre of milk from the corner store must pay for the milk and face criminal charges. So I do not see how someone who diverted hundreds of thousands of dollars from Canadian tax authorities could simply walk away by writing a cheque and facing no criminal consequences.

That is how the Conservatives work. They are trying to destroy the traditional economy, as they did with the forestry sector, and open up new markets with tax havens like Panama. We have never supported that; we will not support it today; and we never will. We will always be against the way the Conservatives, supported by the Liberals, choose to govern by taking away from the poor to give to the rich.

• (1555)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his comments today.

The fact of the matter is that France did show some leadership with regard to chasing people who are investing in tax havens. First, it compiled a list of the tax havens. I think it was 17 or 18 countries, and then it proactively levied a tax of 50% on dividends, interests, royalties and service fees paid to anyone based in France to a beneficiary based in countries on its black list, which included Panama. That is what France did.

Guess what? In short order, what did Panama do? It lined up and signed a double taxation avoidance treaty with France. As of now it has eight signed treaties. That is an example of a country that was proactive and got results on tax havens.

What does Canada do? It waits until it gets some tax information from a former employee of the HSBC and it offers them amnesty if anybody wants to come forward and confess their sins. Then we have the Prime Minister going cap in hand to Switzerland to beg the prime minister of Switzerland to help out.

That is a totally different approach than what the French and the Germans have done. Those two countries know what to do in this situation because they are getting results.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Madam Speaker, my colleague is quite right, especially since Canada is headed for a record deficit of more than \$54 billion. The men and women who are watching us, the workers and the retirees, have no hope that there will be a change in their personal situation in terms of the income the government provides, whether it is old age security or employment insurance, to those who need it.

It is even more frustrating when a political party, the Conservative government supported by the Liberals, decides that it will not ask the rich to pay their fair share, while those who suffer the most have no hope of seeing their income rise. They could at least have decided to take from the rich, who have been spared through tax avoidance measures, and improve support for seniors, the unemployed and those without work. That will never happen with this Conservative government supported by the Liberals. Never.

We have to fight hard against free trade agreements such as the one the Conservative government is about to sign with Panama, a country on the OECD grey list of tax havens.

My NDP colleague is right. I hope he will vote with us against this bill.

• (1600)

[English]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his intervention in regard to this bill. We heard his comments in regard to the tax haven that Panama offers. Canadians are incensed by the fact that there are those who defraud the rest of us when they refuse to pay their taxes.

I wanted to ask him about the labour side deals. I have been looking at this agreement and there is, of course, a labour side deal. Unfortunately, it does not protect the men and women who work in this country or in Panama. Without real teeth in labour negotiations and deals, workers both here and in Panama are lost. They are going to be as victimized as the rest of Canadians who will never see those tax fraud artists brought to justice.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Madam Speaker, my colleague is right. As I was telling her, it is even more unfortunate given that the Conservative government, supported by the Liberals, is trying to establish a new economy. It is trying to sell it to us as economic development. However, an entire sector of our traditional industry—I am referring to the forestry industry—has been left to fend for itself. I have trouble understanding that. I can understand that the Conservatives are trying to play politics with this, but I hope that the people will not be deceived.

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-46 today. It is certainly a bill I have been looking forward to speaking to for the last little while.

Government Orders

I enjoyed the two previous speakers. Certainly, the Bloc has put a lot of effort into dealing with the issue of tax havens. Clearly, that is a very important point to which we should have been paying attention in this country for many years already. It is extremely unfair to have corporations and individuals essentially hiding their money in foreign tax havens, basically to save taxes, but it is essentially robbing Canadian taxpayers and stealing from the Canadian public.

The tax dollars that are collected by the government are used to build infrastructure and provide services in this country. A lot of tax haven participants are people who take full advantage of our roads and medical system. Yet, they insist upon putting half a million dollars in a Swiss bank to try to hide income.

It is good to see that after all these years, at least two countries, France and Germany, are actually doing something about it. However, it took them forever, too, to get the ball rolling, and by the way, it had more to do with actually two disgruntled bank employees. The first bank employee worked for a Liechtenstein bank and when he left, he took his computer diskettes and actually sold them to the German government. The German government have chased down the German tax evaders and collected. I am not sure whether it is half a billion dollars, but quite a bit of money in back taxes.

The German government gave the information to the Canadian authorities two years ago. A small number of Canadians were involved, most of whom are from the beautiful province of British Columbia. Guess what? Revenue Canada offered an amnesty to these people. Why would we need an amnesty if we had the names of the tax evaders? I assume they are offering the amnesty because they want people to voluntarily walk in and declare their undeclared income.

Since then, another employee from the HSBC in Switzerland went on the run to France and he too carried a lot of information on maybe 5,000 taxpayers. I believe 160 of them are in Canada and their names have been turned over to Revenue Canada.

Now we have the Prime Minister going to Switzerland this week to talk to the Swiss prime minister to try to get more compliance from Switzerland. The French government did. The French government collected a list of, I believe, 18 tax havens around the world and decided to be proactive. Unlike Canada, which is totally reactive and acts as though we are surprised when something happens. We wish it would not happen because it causes us some inconvenience. The French government levied a tax of 50% proactively on dividends, interest, royalties and service fees paid by anyone based in France to a beneficiary based in the countries on its black list, which in this case included Panama.

Once this happened, it did not take long before some of the 350,000 corporations that are hiding assets in Panama, the French participants of the 350,000, started to get concerned and put pressure on Panama. They will have to take their money out of Panama. In view of that, the Panamanian government simply went cap in hand to France and asked to be removed from the list because it is bad for business, and Panama agreed to sign the taxation avoidance treaty with France.

● (1605)

It signed the double taxation avoidance treaty with France and now there are eight countries that have negotiated tax agreements with Panama.

However, it was not done by coercion. France did it by getting tough on Panama. It got it by taxing its own corporations who were actively doing business in Panama. That is how France got results.

Panama ratified its agreement with Mexico on June 21. I believe the agreement with Barbados is being signed. It has also reached agreements with Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Qatar and Spain, but that is it.

Did we see Canada on this list? Absolutely not. What is Canada doing that the other countries are not doing? Canada is going further. Canada has a free trade deal. Canada is proposing ratification and implementation of a free trade deal with the very country that is a haven for some of our taxpayers. This is a perfect opportunity to follow in France's footsteps and these other eight countries, and demand that before we implement anything, before we pass anything in the House, that we get Panama's agreement on these taxation avoidance treaties.

Once we implement the agreement, once we pass it through the House, what is the incentive for Panama to do anything? There is absolutely none.

We should be proactive as the French were, as the Germans were. When the Prime Minister gets back from Switzerland talking to the Swiss prime minister should get on a plane and visit the Panamanian president, and demand that he sign the double taxation avoidance treaty with Canada, so that we can be number nine. Only when he has done that, then we should be looking at proceeding further, but not putting the cart in front of the horse which is what we are doing.

This is a government that talks about being tough on crime. The government is soft on crime.

We have mentioned many times that the number of white collar criminals put in jail in the United States is 1,200. The number in Canada is one, two convictions both against the same person.

The Americans feel their system is not tough enough and they want to get tougher. They are recalibrating, recalculating and reregulating the whole financial services industry.

Let us look at what the United States is doing in this case. The United States is dealing with a Panama treaty as well. Guess what? Fifty-four congressmen have demanded that President Obama forgo the agreement with Panama until Panama signs the tax information exchange treaties, so we have activity going on there.

Government Orders

I do not know if anyone has mentioned the situation with AIG. AIG, the House will recall, received huge bailout money from the American taxpayers only two years ago. Guess what? It is one of the 350,000 foreign registered companies operating in Panama and it is suing U.S. authorities right now to keep, I believe, \$306 million in back taxes that it wants to hold back on because it has been using the Panamanian tax haven. Is that not sweet? The taxpayers bailed it out in its time of need with huge amounts of money. The next year it turned around and rewarded itself by giving employees huge bonuses and now it is suing the taxpayers to keep its ill-gotten gains through tax havens like Panama.

These are the types of companies that we are dealing with. We have to get tough with them. It is about time the Prime Minister started doing something, rather than just pretending that he is tough on crime. He is soft on white collar crime.

• (1610)

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could expand on his discussion in regard to the tax haven and the fact that companies and individuals are dumping money in tax havens.

I wonder if he could also address to what is happening to union workers on the ground. I note that in July there was a new wave of anti-union repression in Panama, resulting in several workers being killed. Over 100 were injured and 300 arrested, including the leaders of SUNTRACS and the CONATO trade union.

My colleague has a great interest in the rights of workers in Canada and abroad. I would like to hear his thoughts in regard to this kind of overt violence against men and women who are simply seeking fair compensation for their work or the ability, I think more accurately, to fend for themselves and their families.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. There has been a new wave of anti-union repression in Panama. This is hardly a good time to be implementing a free trade deal when a situation like that is developing in that country. Several workers were killed. Over 100 were injured and over 300 were arrested, including leaders of the trade unions.

We are considering this at a time when trade with Panama is actually very small. We only have \$132 million in trade with Panama. Even if we were not to proceed with a free trade deal, this trade would not go away. There has been some suggestion on the part of the government that somehow if we do not sign a free trade deal with Panama or any other country that we will stop trading with them. That is not going to happen. There has been trade with Panama for many years and we will continue to trade with Panama for many years with or without the free trade deal.

Let us not put the cart in front of the horse. Let us get the tax avoidance agreement signed with Panama while we still have some clout. Eight other countries have signed agreements, including France. France received compliance from Panama. Why can we not do the same thing? I would ask the Prime Minister to pause a bit, to follow in France's footsteps, and maybe in the whole area of tax havens.

I want to ask the government about its arrears situation in GST and income tax, corporate taxes, and other kinds of taxes that it may be a

little slow to collect from some people. The fact of the matter is that the government could collect a lot of this money if it followed what France did when it formulated its black list.

• (1615)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, the discussion in regard to the fact that money is not being collected leads me to a question that pertains more to Canada's reality. My esteemed colleague has indicated he has questions for our government with regard to tax evasion here.

More specifically, I read in the paper today that the government has determined that \$33 million is owed in terms of unpaid taxes and suspect it is far more, yet the government is laying off 500 civil servants, many of them at the Canada Revenue Agency. We know that for every \$1 invested in a worker at CRA, \$5 is recouped in terms of revenue. I wonder if my colleague would comment on that.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, the member is correct. The fact of the matter is that tax evasion has been a big problem for many years. We cannot provide services and infrastructure to the taxpayers and the citizens of Canada if we allow corporations and wealthy individuals to simply take their money offshore. As long as tax havens are available, people and corporations will gravitate toward those tax havens. It has to be a concerted international effort to shut these places down.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Elmwood—Transcona and especially the member for Burnaby—New Westminster for outlining some of the key concerns that New Democrats have with Bill C-46.

Some of us have ridings that have been impacted by trade deals or agreements that have seriously affected the ability of people in our ridings to make a living. I just have to point to the softwood lumber agreement. My riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan is still feeling the effects of that agreement. It was supposedly going to be great and resolve all kinds of issues. In fact, it has meant that we continue to ship jobs south. People in my riding are certainly very concerned about this move toward the kinds of trade agreements that simply do not benefit Canadians.

We have often heard from the other side of the House that New Democrats are opposed to trade and that is absolutely not true.

Mr. Ed Fast: When is the last time you voted for a free trade agreement?

Ms. Jean Crowder: What New Democrats feel is really important is that it is incumbent upon us as legislators to perform the due diligence, to examine those kinds of trade agreements to ensure that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1620)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, we need to ensure that they are of benefit to Canadian citizens.

Government Orders

A member across is asking when is the last time a New Democrat agreed to a trade agreement. We have not because we do not see a benefit to Canadians. Often we are accused of just opposing things. We have actually had some proposals about what trade agreements should look like. New Democrats talk about fair trade, not free trade. I want to talk about a couple of those elements, because they are absent from this agreement.

New Democrats believe that a trade policy should be based on the principles of fair, sustainable and equitable trade. Equitable trade is an important aspect of any agreement.

We also believe there are a number of overall strategies that should be in place when we are looking at trade agreements. These include a comprehensive, common-sense impact assessment on all international agreements which demonstrates that trade deals that Canada negotiates are beneficial to Canadian families, workers and industries. The government should not sign any trade agreement that would lead to a net job loss. I referenced the softwood lumber agreement earlier and the impact that has had on jobs in our communities from coast to coast to coast.

Trade agreements that Canada negotiates should support Canada's sovereignty and freedom to chart its own policy, support our ability to be a competitive force on the world stage, and support the principles of a multilateral, fair trade system. Of course with these trade agreements and what is happening with foreign takeovers of our industries, that kind of impact assessment simply is not happening, especially around the issue of sovereignty.

A fundamental principle that all trade agreements must promote is the protection of human rights by prohibiting the import, export or sale in Canada of any product that is deemed to have been created under sweatshop conditions, forced labour or other conditions that are not in accordance with fundamental international labour standards and human rights.

Another fundamental principle is that all trade agreements should respect sustainable development and the integrity of all ecosystems.

There are other elements that we propose are important to any fair trade agreement. We simply find that the agreements that come before the House do not include those elements.

This Panama bilateral free trade agreement has four components: free market access in goods and services, investment protection, labour protection and an agreement on the environment. The labour protection agreement and the agreement on the environment are side agreements. They are not even incorporated into the trade agreement.

I want to touch on three aspects of this because I only have a brief period of time.

Regarding labour co-operation, we have seen this in other agreements. Under the Colombia free trade agreement, we saw what was being characterized as pay a fine, kill a trade unionist. In Colombia, we have certainly seen continuing violence against trade union members.

When we look at the Panama free trade agreement, we see that it is going to make it easier for Canadian and foreign corporations to flout Canadian labour laws, to pay their workers in Panama an

average wage of about \$2 an hour, and not have to pay for pension or sick leave benefits.

In Canada, we have laws that protect workers. We have some minimum standards. I think many of us are concerned about the erosion of some of those standards. We only need to look at what is happening with private sector pensions in Canada, but workers in Panama simply do not have access to the same level of benefits as in Canada, nor is there anything in this agreement that would ensure that workers in Panama would not be subjected to conditions that we would simply find intolerable here.

The labour co-operation agreement within the Panama free trade agreement does not have any vigorous enforcement mechanisms. As I mentioned, this is a very similar template to what was used in the Colombia free trade agreement. Because there are not these kinds of protections, that should be of concern to this House. In the Colombia free trade agreement, there had been a recommendation made for a full study on any kind of human rights violations before we proceeded with that agreement, and that did not happen.

It is the same thing with the side agreement on the environment. It has no effective mechanism to force Canada or Panama to respect environmental rights. The agreement commits both countries to pursue environmental co-operation and to work to improve their environmental laws and policies, but it can only ask both parties to enforce their domestic laws, and if they do so, there are very few remedies if they violate their own laws.

• (1625)

I would argue that what we have here is an agreement which, if Canadians truly understood both the labour and the environmental aspects of it, they would be saying not to sign onto it.

A number of other members have touched on the issue of tax havens. I am going to raise that issue as well because the government says it is going to crack down on tax havens and yet we are signing onto a free trade agreement with a country that has a notorious reputation for being a tax haven. I want to touch on a couple of aspects around tax havens and the investor portion of it.

The trade deal does not provide investors or labour with a level playing field. While under chapter 11 investors have the right to seek binding arbitration, they can pursue independently a trade union in Panama that does not get to pursue a case to arbitration. They can file a complaint that would lead to an investigation report, but it is up to the government to seek remedies and damages. I mention that because chapter 11 has been a serious problem for us and we feel that this is another way of simply brushing some of the issues under the carpet.

Other members have talked about the opposition in the United States to this free trade agreement. When members of the U.S. Congress speak out quite vocally, it is important for us to pay attention.

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In a letter signed by two members of Congress in April 2009, they indicated that Panama's industrial policy is premised on obtaining a comparative advantage by banning taxation of foreign corporations, hiding tax liabilities and transactions behind banking secrecy rules and the ease with which U.S. and other firms can create unregulated subsidiaries.

According to the state department, Panama has over 350,000 foreign registered companies. We can almost guarantee that those are shells that allow the flow-through of money to avoid taxation in the countries where those companies actually operate. The member for Elmwood—Transcona mentioned that AIG is very keen on these tax havens in Panama, and we heard about the court cases and whatnot that are unfolding.

An article on the Dow Jones Newswires says that tax haven questions could trip up the Panama trade pact. It says that the OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, listed Panama as one of the 30 tax haven jurisdictions that have committed to international standards on bank secrecy but have not yet substantially implemented those standards. The member for Elmwood—Transcona mentioned that there are eight countries that now have agreements with Panama. But, as usual, the devil is in the details.

With its track record, its history of secrecy, its unwillingness to supply information, one would wonder why at this point we would be willing to sign an agreement without some of those guarantees, some of that transparency and accountability that the Conservative government always references being in place to protect Canadians and Canadian companies.

New Democrats will be opposing Bill C-46, and I think with very good reason. We encourage other members in the House to take a close look at some of the flaws in this agreement.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan packed a lot into a short amount of time and pointed out some of the ideological flaws that exist. I want to ask her about a specific one.

She talked about the tax havens. I would like her to bring this home to what the impact on average Canadians might be if this trade agreement were to go ahead, if Panama were to maintain these shell corporations that evade taxes here in Canada while making their profits here in Canada and other countries. What would be the implications for working Canadians, for governments and for our economy to sign a so-called deal with the devil, as they say, sign a deal with a party that is a known violator of international tax laws and the trade deal does little or nothing to correct that? What would be the impact on Canadian families if Canada were to go ahead with this flawed agreement?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, one of the things that often gets lost in these conversations is what it is our taxes pay for. Not only do Canadian families benefit from taxes that are paid in this country, whether it is good schools, education, health care or roads, the TransCanada Highway, but corporations also benefit from taxes that are paid in this country.

When corporations pay their fair share of taxes in this country, they get an educated workforce. They get people who go to kindergarten through grade 12, graduate and go on to universities,

which are also publicly supported. They get access to workers who have access to a publicly funded, publicly delivered health care system. They get access to the roads and, let us face it, municipal infrastructure which is also supported through federal tax dollars with various agreements that are put in place.

We need to turn this conversation around and talk about the corporations that are avoiding their responsibilities, getting a free ride in Canada by getting access to benefits that the rest of Canadians are paying for through their tax dollars and they are not contributing their fair share to the upkeep and maintenance of our infrastructure. We need to be putting hard questions to those corporations that are evading their tax responsibilities in this country.

• (1630)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that Germany and France have actually been collecting a lot of the back taxes from the people who have been investing in these tax havens.

France showed us how to do it. France got its black list together of 18 countries, and scared the companies. France levied a tax of 50% on dividends, interest, royalties and service fees paid to anyone based in France to a beneficiary based in the country on its blacklist, including Panama. What France did is it scared its own companies. France was taxing them right at the source.

No one, that I know of, has ever done that before. Look at the results. Panama rushed over and signed an agreement, exactly what they wanted. Panama signed a double-taxation avoidance treaty with France in the last few months, and now eight countries are on board. That is how to get action.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, I would argue that responsible government is about making sure that people are paying their fair share, that people are making sure that somebody is not getting a free ride.

I talked earlier about the benefits to Canadians and to corporations when everybody pays their fair share of taxes. One of the benefits they get is a qualified workforce. A qualified workforce includes first nations, and I know that first nations often come up as a topic of discussion because they are the labour force of the future.

Just imagine if those corporations were paying their fair share of taxes and children on reserve and off reserve were getting access to an education that was equal to other Canadians. Looking to the future, 15 or 20 years from now, those young aboriginal kids would be the future employees of these corporations. That is being responsible corporate citizens. That is paying their fair share of taxes to make sure that their legacy and their workforce is available.

There are examples of other countries making sure that they are collecting those taxes. Canada should look to some of those other models.

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Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to enter this debate today to talk about the proposed trade deal between Canada and Panama, our neighbour to the south. It is an interesting and engaging debate, because it brings up philosophical differences between the progressive politics of the New Democrats and the anti-progressive politics of the Conservatives, when it comes to approaching trade negotiations with other countries.

It is worthy of note that New Democrats have supported fair trade deals throughout our history. We have empowered governments to say that they must trade in the world. We are a trading nation, but we must trade on terms that are ethically and morally correct, in the eyes of contemporary and future Canadians. A trade relationship with another country is an opportunity to share values, to exchange the best of both countries in the way of products, ideas, management of markets, responsible extraction of resources, and protection of the rights of workers.

We have a government in office that is interested in any trade deal, as opposed to a good one. It crows over the number of deals it has made or has in progress. However, I would suggest that a bad deal is worse than no deal at all. This can be true for both sides.

All the government seems to be interested in doing is ticking another number off on the trade-deal front. It goes into negotiations with the notion that we will make a trade deal, regardless of the terms or the net benefits to Canadians, and ignoring the grievances that will be caused to people on the other side of the deal, in this case the Panamanians.

There is a philosophy underpinning this approach. It says that any trade deal will automatically bring greater democracy and accountability to the trading nation, particularly if it is a country like Panama, which has suffered for many years under various dictatorships and foreign influences. We saw the episode with Noriega. We saw the U.S. influence through its corporate lobby pressure, using the CIA and whatnot, and the ripple effect that occurred throughout Central America.

I have worked in Panama and in various surrounding countries, and one can see the erosion of democracy at a foundational level when outside countries exert irresponsible influence. Panama, having recovered somewhat from this, still struggles with some of the basic principles of transparency and accountability.

In that regard, it shares a lot of similarities with the current Conservative government. It agrees that accountability might be dangerous for the sitting regime, it does not call ministers to account, and it feels that allegations of corruption should remain allegations, without any actual investigation. Perhaps this is why it has been able to march in step to a trade deal that does not address some of the most fundamental values of Canadians. I will go into some of them.

It is important for members to keep in mind the real impacts on constituents and working people. As a trading nation, we should always seek the most favourable terms for ourselves and our trading partner.

We must also seek terms that align with our own values and beliefs, not just the belief in trade. That is a fine and noble principle, but it is also important to leave the planet a little better than we found

it. If one is part of a labour union, one's life should not be on the line. Fair wages for an honest day's work should be a principle embedded in every government policy.

We have fought and struggled for these principles in this country. Sometimes these struggles have resulted in protests, violence, and great disruption to our national fabric, but we have come out the other end. We still have many struggles to go. Pay equity is a fantastic example: working women still earn only 78¢ for every dollar a man earns doing the same job. These are struggles we must face and counter. I would suggest the current government has not devoted enough time to issues like this.

First nations, mentioned earlier by my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan, are still living in conditions of poverty that no Canadian, regardless of political background, should accept. We have much work to do together.

• (1635)

However, when we engage in trade, when we engage in the effort to deal with another country and export the best of ourselves, our ideas, our products, our innovations, and our industries, this benefits us and the country we are dealing with as well.

For the riding I represent in northwestern British Columbia, trade is inherent in who we are and what we do. From time immemorial, the first nations of our region have traded across the continent and in fact around the world. Just this past weekend I was at a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Tahltan Declaration at Telegraph Creek, British Columbia. One of the issues that came up and was celebrated was that the obsidian arrowheads the Tahltan people have made for thousands of years have been found in Africa, Europe, and South America, traded hundreds and hundreds of years ago.

It is a natural orientation for us in the northwest. We have things that other people want. But the principle was always that we would never degrade our own environment, our own quality of life, to enable that trade. We certainly would not want to export misery and enable other places to do harm to their people through our trade. Whether we were trading fish, arrowheads, or modern minerals, the companies and the communities that I represent seek to have a true net benefit, putting people to work in our region, putting food on the table and allowing good things to happen, while enabling other countries to receive the benefit of any technological improvements.

Government Orders

We have come to a strange and unusual moment in the international trading market. Prince Rupert, British Columbia, for example, has been the hub of fish processing for many decades. But now we are seeing job after job lost. Fish caught in British Columbia waters are put in freezer trucks, transported on highways to another port, put on freezer ships to China, processed there, then put back on a ship and sent back to us, to be sold at 15 or 20 times the original value. Somehow, the government says this is the rational market at work. It says this is the way things ought to be: a fish steak eaten in Prince Rupert and caught 50 kilometres away goes around the world to get back to our plate. It is a kind of insanity, and it leads us to a degraded, unsustainable world. The local impacts are significant and serious.

For the mining sector, which is now undergoing a renewal in my part of the world, exploration rates are through the roof, and companies are spending more and more money seeking out those minerals. We have seen an evolution from within the mining sector itself, brought about by companies that 50 years ago maybe did not do such a great job. They left behind mines that polluted, and they treated the local first nation population with disrespect, not hiring locally as much as they should have. These companies are now signing protocol agreements with first nations. They are co-operating in revenue-sharing streams, giving guarantees of local hiring, and adopting environmental standards that go far beyond the weak and watered-down regulations that the government has provided. These companies have come to realize that the social licence to operate is critical.

In these trade deals, there is social licence to operate. There is a social test that we have to put these deals through. We must ask governments in this trade deal and the previous ones if they are willing to commit the deal to measurement. They say these deals will open up labour markets. They say they will improve working conditions and will not degrade the environment. If they are so confident, they ought to be able to specify environmental and labour standards in the agreement itself, rather than in side agreements, and measure compliance with those standards. We need to see the before and after. Show us the benefit. Are they willing to commit to that type of accountability, that type of transparency? Of course not. That is a shame and it brings great suspicion on the deal itself.

If it is so great for the labour community in Panama, if it is so great for the environment of Panama, if it is so certain that nothing bad will come out of this, then let us measure it. If we cannot measure something, we cannot manage it. Certainly, the government is not interested in abiding by any of these principles, which I believe are fundamental Canadian values. When a government operates outside the values of the country it represents, then that government is not capable of making good deals. This is certainly not a good deal.

• (1640)

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could comment on this: I remember a time when the argument for NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, was that it would lift people in the developing country out of poverty. Contrary to that, what we saw was an exploitation of these same people. Young men and women worked in factories, manufacturing clothing or car parts, and they

were paid so little that they could not afford to buy the very clothing they were making. They were compelled to send their own children to work at an age that would make most of us very concerned.

What occurred was child labour and taking advantage of young people: many of the people subject to this kind of exploitation were young women. These free trade agreements did not help the people who were struggling. I wonder if my colleague would comment on the young people, the workers of Panama.

• (1645)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, the tragedy is that trade deals like NAFTA could have helped. There was an opportunity available to a previous Conservative government to put into the deal something that would result in a net benefit to both sides, to the working people of Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Instead, we saw the operation of the maquiladoras just across the border in Mexico continue at a rampant pace.

We should ask the Americans how the border is doing these days. One of the promises of NAFTA was that illegal immigration would go from a flood to a trickle after the signing of NAFTA. The Americans are building a massive fence along the border. The problems are maintained because, when we have bad trade deals, we do not actually affect the foundational problems of an economy. The foundations within the Mexican economy encourage people to leave, because they are exploited ruthlessly in some of these factories, and much of this exploitation is directed at women and children.

“Women and children first” was the old patriarchal slogan. It was not meant this way. It did not mean they could line up first for the exploitative jobs. But that is what happens, and it happens time and time again. Will it happen in Panama? Absolutely. We have seen it in NAFTA, and we saw it in the so-called softwood trade deal. It was supposed to be a benefit.

This week I will be in Bella Coola. They have virtually lost their entire forestry sector, in part because of the softwood lumber deal. Now they are also under floods and in a state of emergency, compounding the troubles the community is going through. But they are resilient. They are willing to work and they want to work. They want to work in the things that they know how to do, which is producing the resources the world wants. But they need a government that is a partner and a supporter of small resource communities across Canada. They built the country, for goodness' sake, and government after government has allowed them to erode and die slowly, town by town. That has to stop. These trade deals compound on one another. They do not achieve enough benefit for either us or our trading partners. They help only the few, the rich. It has to stop.

Government Orders

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Before resuming debate, 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 Etobicoke North, the Environment; the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood, International Aid.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sudbury.

[English]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-46, which would implement a bilateral free trade agreement with Panama.

As we do with all free trade legislation, I along with my NDP colleagues have carefully examined the details of this bill. We need to ensure that any free trade agreement we sign is progressive, that it looks closely at the treatment of labour activists and equality for women and minority groups, and that it contains provisions for environmental protection.

Unfortunately, this free trade agreement with Panama falls short on the protection of labour activists. While there are provisions for labour protection, there is no means with which to enforce this part of the treaty. It seems that the provision is there to placate critics without trying to accurately tackle the issue.

This is a real issue in Panama. July saw a massive crackdown on union members and labour leaders in Panama. New legislation was brought forward by the government, which limited the rights of workers to strike and even their freedom of association, including provisions to jail for up to two years any workers taking their protests to the streets.

These are rights that are enshrined in article 23 of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and in the declaration of the fundamental principles and rights at work of the International Labour Organization. Yet the Government of Panama seems happy to trample on 60 years of international law.

If this were not bad enough, when the citizens took to the streets to legitimately and democratically highlight their opposition to this legislation, the government reacted violently. More than 100 protesters were injured, some fatally, and more than 300 protesters were jailed, including the leaders of the SUNTRACS and CONATO trade unions.

The government is clearly not committed to the rights of organized labour, and its violent reaction to the protest shows that a toothless labour provision is simply not enough. If this government were serious about the labour protection, then this free trade act would have a real means to enforce the labour provisions. Without it, the provisions are worthless.

When considering this free trade agreement with Panama, we must also look at Panama's tax code. Panama is recognized both by international bodies like the OECD and by other countries as a tax haven. Tax havens allow large corporations and rich individuals in Canada to shelter their income from the government and avoid paying the tax they owe the government.

While thousands of Canadians are struggling to pay their bills, I cannot understand why this government would try to ratify a free trade agreement with a country that is allowing people and corporations to evade paying their taxes. Let us not mince words here. Those people who are avoiding paying these taxes are stealing from the average hard-working Canadian.

This government, which claims to be tough on crime, is happy to have different rules for these high-earning criminals than for the average Canadian. It claims it wants to crack down on tax evaders, but while it talks the talk, it certainly does not walk the walk.

When the government got the names of Canadians illegally sheltering funds in Europe, it offered them a voluntary disclosure program, which is nothing more than a partial tax amnesty. Sure, they had to pay some interest and penalties to the CRA, but these are not people who accidentally filed their taxes incorrectly. These are people who purposely hid money from the government for the explicit reason of avoiding paying taxes. This is not a mistake. It is criminal intent.

If someone steals a TV from your home, the police do not just get them to return the TV and give you ten bucks for your trouble. This is effectively what the government did to these tax evaders. It was an economic slap on the wrist maybe, but certainly it was very lenient punishment. They certainly were not treated like the typical criminal would be.

It is not just that this free trade agreement does not try to put in place a provision to deal with the shelter of income from the government. It is also that the free trade agreement will undoubtedly create additional loopholes, which will be exploited so that even more income is sheltered offshore.

• (1650)

Think of what we could do with the extra tax revenue, which we are not already losing. How can the government tell people that it cannot afford to cut the federal tax from home heating or increase payments to pensioners when it is happy to sign off on a free trade agreement that allows for so many individuals and corporations to avoid paying taxes?

The bill points to an increasingly worrying trend where the government is trying to hollow out the role of the state. It is happy to allow foreign takeovers without really studying the effects on the communities that are affected.

Look at the year-long strike that took place in my great city of Sudbury after the Conservatives approved the sale of Inco to Vale. The government refused to step in and protect the members of USW Local 6500 and the whole community, which also suffered.

When the strike was over, it loaned Vale \$1 billion. Now the government is making it easier for corporations and individuals to avoid paying tax by sheltering their money illegally in Panama, and it will then use lower tax revenues as an excuse to cut important state services.

Government Orders

The bill does nothing to support hard-working individuals in Canada or in Panama. In fact it undermines them, in Canada by cutting the federal tax revenue and in Panama by giving the government international credibility on labour issues when it is violently and undemocratically cracking down on union members.

The bill is an insult to anyone who works hard and pays taxes while rich individuals and corporations avoid their responsibilities.

This is why I will not be supporting the bill.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for an excellent presentation on the bill.

The fact of the matter is that no fewer than 54 United States congressmen have demanded that President Obama forgo the agreement with Panama until Panama has signed the tax information exchange treaties, which by the way, France got in short order when it started taxing the French corporations that were part of the 350,000 that are operating in Panama.

The fact of the matter is that the Americans also know Panama is a tax haven. In fact the justice department of the United States says that Panama is a major conduit for Mexican and Colombian drug traffickers. Therefore it is not only a tax haven like we are normally used to but it is also a conduit for Mexican and Colombian drug traffickers, says the U.S. justice department, and money laundering activities. I do not know how much worse it can get.

Surely the government would not want to be associating with and helping to facilitate drug traffickers and money launderers when it purports to be tough on crime. Obviously when it comes to white collar crime it is very soft on crime.

The Prime Minister is off to Switzerland with cap in hand to talk to the Swiss prime minister about getting information on our people hiding money in tax havens. We give amnesty. That is how we treat people who cheat on taxes.

Yet the French government simply took the bull by the horns, got a list of 18 tax havens in the world and brought in tough tax regulations on its own companies. That caused them to start putting pressure on the Panamanians who were now going to lose business. When they saw they were going to lose business, guess what. They went to France and signed the agreement. There are eight agreements signed now just in the last few months, and Canada is not one of them.

• (1655)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague's question brings to mind the year-long strike we just had in my community of Sudbury with Vale Inco.

What it brings to mind is that, if we go back 40 to 50 years, we remember that the steel workers were actually out demonstrating in the streets. And they just did this; the steel workers just did this over the duration of that strike. To see what happened in Panama when the government violently cracked down on striking workers, it sends fear to think what would be happening here.

Fortunately we have been able to advance, but we need to be able to support countries like Panama to be able to advance, to move forward so people can democratically protest in the street.

We need to be progressive when we are looking at fair trade agreements. The point that my hon. colleague brought up is that this agreement is not fair. It is an open door to almost anything, tax havens and so on. There are not enough protections in the agreement for the environment; there are not at all enough protections for labour activists; and we need to continue to make sure there are protections in it for women's rights and minority groups.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was wondering why, in a period of economic recovery, the NDP is so opposed to free trade and helping Canadian businesses and families succeed. This trade agreement will actually eliminate tariffs on 90% of the products that we ship to Panama. This will help agriculture. This will help forestry. This will help the business sector grow and expand. It will help families have jobs. In fact, in the pulp and paper industry I understand that 30% more can go into Panama once this deal goes through.

Why would those members be opposed to that? It just blows my mind. I wonder if the member could explain that.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Madam Speaker, here is something that will help continue to blow the member's mind.

We are talking about fair trade, fair trade to ensure environmental protections, fair trade to ensure rights for labour activists and women's groups and minority groups. We can continue to trade.

My hon. colleague talked about the agreements that France has signed with Panama. Has the government even asked Panama to look at those similar types of agreements? Or does it just say that it is an open-door policy, so Panama can shoot and kill labour activists and destroy the environment, we can sell a few more pigs and that is great? Farmers in my community have told me they do not want blood on their hands, if we are looking at trading with places like Colombia and Panama.

The important thing we need to do here is ensure that we talk about fair trade.

• (1700)

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join with my colleagues this afternoon to speak to this bill, a bill that is us causing some real concern.

New Democrats have a tremendous interest in everything fair and just. I do not see much fairness and justice in moving ahead *holus bolus* in the way we are. We have seen so many free trade agreements come before the House in these last few months. This is another in a series of agreements that the government has chosen to aggressively move toward signing, without really considering the long-term and short-term ramifications to workers, the environment and particularly to the people of Panama, as we challenge them to live up to some of the international accords and agreements that so many countries have signed, such as the environment, the rights of workers and that kind of thing.

Government Orders

I spoke on the Colombia free trade agreement not that long ago. I will make some of the same arguments tonight that I made then because it is not that dissimilar an agreement to the one in front of us.

Canada is entering into an arrangement with a country that has a questionable track record with regard to looking after its workers, protecting the rights of workers to organize and protecting the environment. Not to speak of the impact that all of this will have on the domestic economy of Canada, which is what we should be most concerned about right now.

Across Canada we are working hard in community after community, with provinces doing their bit. However, the federal government in many ways is missing in action, because it is so focused on these kinds of initiatives.

We are pulling ourselves out of the recession and are trying to find ways to create work, get people back to work and get our own local domestic economy in place. We need to rebuild communities that have been challenged, threatened and shattered so badly.

The collapse of the global economy and the financial system was in many ways affected by the rush of countries, like Canada, the United States and others around the world, to deregulate and get into global trading in a way that was not well thought out. In doing that, they forgot that the end result of anything we do, in terms of an economy and trading and work, should benefit people, communities and the country.

The free trade agreements all started by the late 1980s, early 1990s when Brian Mulroney and his government of the day delivered the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Then we saw the Jean Chrétien-Paul Martin Liberal government come into power. We thought it would revisit and rethink some of this and in fact sit down with our partners in the North American Free Trade Agreement and fix some of the obvious shortcomings. However, it did not do that. It did more, from right-wing ideology point of view, to fast-track free trade, not only with the United States but with Mexico as well.

In doing so, it got us into a vortex that has seen the lives of working men and women in Canada become less and less valued. The standard of living has been reduced. The amount of money being spent on programs to support people has been reduced significantly. The role of government has been questioned and reduced.

•(1705)

If we are to continue down the road of free trade agreements, and particularly in this instance of a free trade agreement with a country of questionable labour practices, we end up with is a local domestic economy in Canada that is less than it has the potential to be.

In the mid-nineties and into the late-nineties, Paul Martin moved to deal aggressively with a deficit and tried to create an environment in Canada that was more conducive to this free trade regime. As he began to see the result of that deficit fighting, the program cutting, the government reduction and an improving economy, instead of rethinking that approach to public life in Canada and reinstating some of the programs and money that flowed to provinces and

municipalities to support people, he began to give huge corporate tax breaks.

We were told and bought into a way of thinking that we could reduce government spending, which is another way of speaking about reducing deficit because all governments have a deficit and they keep it in balance with the GDP, et cetera. However, as we reduce government spending and the role of government in the public life of a country and as we deregulate more and more industry and reduce the amount of taxes coming in through business and corporations, a number of things begin to happen. One is the government loses its ability to intervene, to be helpful and to support the people that it is elected to serve. However, the thinking is if we do that, we make ourselves more attractive to foreign investment. That is why we can then sign on to more of these free trade agreements. People want to come here and take advantage of some of the human resources and natural resources that are available to us in Canada. However, the rules that attend these free trade agreements are not necessarily in the best interests of the people in the jurisdiction in which the agreement is being implemented.

For example, I was up in the Northwest Territories two weeks ago at a poverty conference. People from every community across those territories gathered in Yellowknife to speak about poverty. Two members of the legislative assembly in the Northwest Territories moved a motion to introduce an anti-poverty strategy, something that six other provinces have done.

In developing this strategy and looking at the needs of the people they are trying to serve and trying to improve the lot of citizens in the communities that they work in, they are turning to their provincial governments. The provincial governments in turn, as they roll out their anti-poverty strategies, are looking to the federal government for involvement, to be engaged, to give leadership, to come to the table and provide resources.

However, the federal government is saying that it does not have the money because it has a huge deficit to deal with now because of the collapse of the economy and the difficulty in the financial world. The government of the day is putting together a plan to deal with the deficit that will be in keeping with the track record we have seen over the last 10 to 15 years our country.

Before we do anything else, before any other priority, including dealing with poverty, we have to ensure we are creating a climate—

•(1710)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. Questions and comments, the hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to what my colleague was saying. I was very interested in the case study with respect to the Northwest Territories and its legislature in developing an anti-poverty strategy. Surely he would agree that an anti-poverty strategy in an underdeveloped or developing economy is creating jobs.

Government Orders

If this treaty creates jobs, and there are protections in side agreements with respect to civil rights issues, human rights issues and the rights of employees, would he agree that the climate he was just starting to allude to is the kind of climate that we need to set an example of with fair trade between ourselves and developing economies? It is good for the economies of those countries and ours if it is fairly done.

Would he agree that this is the kind of climate we want to create and that this legislation is an attempt to take albeit a modest step in that direction, but one that will trickle down and benefit the people in Panama?

Mr. Tony Martin: Madam Speaker, that question allows me to finish my thought.

If we are talking fair trade, I have no problem. I do not think anybody on this side of the House in the New Democrat caucus has any problem with fair trade. The problem is with the kinds of trade agreements we are and have been entering into.

The environment we seem to be creating is causing poverty like we have not seen for a long time, particularly following the collapse in the financial world over the last two years. We are trying to make Canada attractive to foreign investment to the detriment of the people of Canada.

The thinking is this. If we reduce corporate taxes, which takes money out of government coffers, reduce government spending and cut programs, then we become more attractive to foreign investors that we want to take advantage of our resources. This is what in many ways then creates the lack of resources we need to deal with some of the very difficult challenges that poverty presents in places like the Northwest Territories. That is the point I am making.

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Madam Speaker, could the member answer the following questions?

I understand in part what he is saying, but it does not seem to compute. Does he not see this as a good first step for the people of Panama and Canada? How does it help the people of Panama if we do not remove artificial barriers, if Canadians do not buy their products, if Panama is not able to sell its products here? How does it help the people of Canada if they do not have more choices, if they cannot buy more products and sell more products to Panama? I just do not understand how this does it. Could the member answer those questions?

Also, would he mind answering the question that is on the minds of most Canadians? New Democrats are using a type of technicality to thwart the democratic will of the people of Canada and the majority of members in the House. Could he answer why NDP members are so anti-democratic and why they do not want to help the people of Canada, farmers in particular, and the people of Panama?

Mr. Tony Martin: Madam Speaker, does he not feel I have a democratic right to stand in this place and make my case on behalf of the people who elect me? If that is not democratic, then I guess we could have further discussion about that.

He asked a question about the people of Panama. Certainly the NDP has a concern and interest in the welfare and well-being of the

people of Panama. However, if we simply enter into agreements with it on trade without insisting on strong regulation where human rights are concerned, for example, the government of Panama will think it is fine to continue with the track record that it has shown over the last number of years such as trade unionists being killed simply for exercising the democratic rights that we take for granted in Canada.

• (1715)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am glad to join the debate on the Canada-Panama free trade agreement.

It is a bit of a shock to see yet another trade agreement, especially with a country that represents about only 1% of our trade, but I will add my 2¢ nonetheless.

What we are being asked to approve is another in an ever-growing line of NAFTA-style agreements. These are agreements that promote what many call the race to the bottom, agreements that seek a level playing field which we are well aware is level for some, like investors, and lopsided for the rest of those affected by them.

I am sure that most in this chamber are familiar with the concerns New Democrats have been raising about these kinds of agreements. We have been consistent in our criticism of agreements that make a mockery of environmental standards and labour practices; fail to protect or promote human rights; entrench poverty in already struggling populations, just like we see here in Canada where a quarter of a million seniors live in poverty; and ultimately lead to a siphoning off of Canadian jobs.

Many of my colleagues have raised these very points again and again. Yet, they seem to fall on deaf ears as the ideologically-driven right wing cements a world that is defined by haves and have nots.

From my perspective, this deal is flawed. We are being asked to cozy up to a country with a terrible record when it comes to labour standards and the rights of workers. This is a country that has new legislation restricting the right to strike and freedom of association. In this country, Panama, this past summer we saw several workers killed, over 100 injured and more than 300 arrested as they protested the legislation. Is that what our government hopes to promote with this deal?

It is truly a step backward from the rights and freedoms fought for and enjoyed by Canadian workers.

It is all the more disappointing that labour is dealt with as a side agreement. It would be refreshing to see an agreement come about where human rights and labour standards are the primary goal and investor rights are dealt with as an afterthought. However, I do not imagine we will be seeing that any time soon from the current government.

What we see here is another in a long line of measures from the current government, and its predecessors, that pays attention to the needs of banks and CEOs at the expense of everyday people.

Government Orders

The current government likes to say the economy is its number one priority. I say it is too bad Canadians were not its number one priority. If that were the case, our trade policy would take a different shape. We would not have thousands of forestry sector workers unemployed. We would not be fighting foreign ownerships to honour pensions people worked their entire lives for, just as we saw in the case of Vale Inco. And we certainly would not be debating endless trade agreements that are not beneficial to most Canadians.

Ultimately, with this agreement we see that again all the meaningful regulations protect investors. If the NAFTA example is any indication, we will watch as money flows out of Canada in chapter 11-type dispute settlement payments. And if recent history is any indication, the government will not even bother to defend Canada when the claims are made.

If we take a look at the side agreement on the environment, it has no teeth. It does not ensure that Canada or Panama will enforce their environmental laws and this is worth considering. We actually have trouble enforcing the current environmental laws we have in place here in Canada.

A good portion of our trade with Panama would be in agriculture. The agreement would remove tariffs. If Panama were to follow the example of Brazil, we would be seeing a significant growth in cattle farming. Panama has some of the most important rainforests on the planet. It is not unreasonable to suspect that this agreement could lead to the destruction of these important cloud forests so that we could have cheap leather and burgers. This is why an environmental side agreement with no real teeth is such a disappointing feature of this agreement.

• (1720)

I do not think it is possible to overstate the fact that Panama is a tax haven and is largely uncooperative with other countries that would like to repatriate missing money.

We have just seen the kind of money that could be hidden from our tax collectors as a result of leaked documents from Swiss HSBC accounts. Why would we pursue a trade agreement with a country as notorious for this as Panama? Not only are we charging ahead with a deal that will mostly benefit large investors, but we will not even be demanding an end to the tax havens they can use to further avoid contributing to our country. It is enough to make one's head spin.

As I said at the outset, this agreement is typically that of a race to the bottom mentality that really does not address the needs of the average person.

I will leave it there because I am sure there will be questions that will need to be answered and I can present more of my speech afterwards if need be.

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Madam Speaker, I actually have the same questions for this member that I had for the last one because they simply were not answered. Again I ask, is this trade agreement not a great first step for the people of Panama, a great first step for their ability to have the things we enjoy here in Canada, the great employment rights that we have, the right to speak our minds, and to have the democratic right to vote?

In this place we all want to have an opportunity to vote on this piece of legislation, except for the NDP members, but they are trying to use some sneaky tactic that is allowed in this place, and I agree to it, but it quite frankly allows a very small minority in this place, a very small number of people who represent a small number of people in Canada, compared to the rest of us, to actually hold up a piece of legislation that would help the rights of people in Panama.

It will actually allow the products of our farmers to be sold in Panama and it will help Canadians, Canadian trade, and the people of Panama. Certainly, the influence Canada has in the world will assist us to trade with Panama and help the people there.

I wonder if the member might answer that question and why we cannot have the democratic right to vote today.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Madam Speaker, the hon. member said the questions are not being answered. I think he is just not listening to the answers.

Why would we want to take on trade deals with people who actually kill trade unionists, who kill their workers? This is basically the same type of labour cooperation agreement, without any vigorous enforcement mechanism, the same template, that was used in the Canada-Colombia agreement: kill a trade unionists and pay a fine.

In the Canada-Peru FTA as well, the labour side agreement does not deliver an effective mechanism for the protection of labour rights. Once we see that, we will be glad to support fair trade agreements.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. I would like to ask for a little bit of order in the House. This is a period of questions and comments and I would ask members to wait until they are recognized. The hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. Alan Tonks: Madam Speaker, I am sure the House has no hesitation in supporting the spirit of what the member has laid out in terms of respect for human rights and in particular, the rights of trade unionists without being victimized. There is no argument with that.

However, when I was sitting on the natural resources committee, we listened to the forestry industry that she had cited and we had all kinds of representations before the committee that talked about the advancements that had been made by the Danes, who had taken a lesser quality fibre, had used innovation and developed new markets, and developed a very vibrant forestry sector.

The objective of these kinds of relationships is to have investment where investment is needed. Was that investment not needed in the forestry industry? I am not saying that this agreement will achieve all of that, but is it not a step in the direction to the transfers of capital and investing in Canadian industries and sectors, and reciprocally in Panamanian sectors that will benefit the have nots.

Government Orders

• (1725)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Madam Speaker, I greatly appreciate the comments my hon. colleague has made, but let us be clear here. If we look at northern Ontario, how many people have actually lost their jobs in the forestry sector? Has this actually been beneficial? We are looking at signing an agreement where Canadian and foreign corporations, who move to Panama, flout Canadian labour laws and pay their workers in Panama an average of \$2 an hour. That is about \$300 a month. Let us look at that in reality: no pensions, no benefits, no sick days.

Canadian law states that workers enjoy certain minimum workplace safety laws. Corporations in Panama do not have to do that at any cost. We are seeing people die. Let us really respect human rights.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate. Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

Mr. Brian Jean: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do have some points to make on this particular bill. Obviously, you saw me stand up several times asking questions—

Mrs. Carol Hughes: No, you didn't. You never got up.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. I had recognized the member for a number of questions and when I asked to resume debate, no one rose so I began to read the motion. I believe I must continue at this point.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The vote is deferred until tomorrow after government orders.

* * *

ENDING EARLY RELEASE FOR CRIMINALS AND INCREASING OFFENDER ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed from October 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-39, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It being 5:30 p.m. the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-39.

Call in the members.

• (1815)

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

(Division No. 99)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
André	Angus
Armstrong	Arthur
Ashfield	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Bélanger	Bellavance
Benoit	Bernier
Bevington	Bezan
Bigras	Blackburn
Blais	Blaney
Block	Bonsant
Bouchard	Boucher
Boughen	Bourgeois
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Brunelle
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannis	Cardin
Carrie	Carrier
Casson	Charlton
Chong	Chow
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Coderre	Comartin
Cotler	Crombie
Crowder	Cullen
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	DeBellefeuille
Dechert	Del Mastro
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Devolin
Dewar	Dhalirwal
Dhalla	Dion
Donnelly	Dorion
Dreeshen	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Faille	Fast
Fletcher	Folco
Foote	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Galipeau	Gallant
Garneau	Gaudet
Généreux	Glover
Godin	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guay
Guergis	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback

Government Orders

Hoepfner	Holder
Holland	Hughes
Jean	Jennings
Julian	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kania	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Laforest
Laframboise	Lake
Lauzon	Lavallée
Layton	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Lemieux
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
McTeague	Ménard
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Mulcair	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Nadeau	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Pearson	Petit
Plamondon	Poilievre
Pomerleau	Preston
Proulx	Rae
Rafferty	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Rodriguez
Rota	Russell
Savage	Savoie
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Sgro
Shea	Shiely
Shory	Siksay
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	St-Cyr
Stanton	Stoffer
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Valeriot	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Vincent	Volpe
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilfert	Wong
Woodworth	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich	Young
Zarac — 277	

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Beaudin	Cannon (Pontiac)
Finley	Flaherty
Lalonde	Mourani
Roy	Verner — 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

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

* * *

CANADA-PANAMA FREE TRADE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-46, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Panama, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Panama and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Panama, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. chief government whip is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek I believe you will find unanimous consent to proceed with the vote on the amendment on Bill C-46.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the amendment.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek you will find unanimous consent to apply the vote from the previous motion to the current motion with the Conservatives voting no.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals vote against the amendment.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois vote in favour of the amendment.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the NDP is in favour of this amendment.

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: Mr. Speaker, against.

[Translation]

Mr. André Arthur: Mr. Speaker, I vote against the amendment.

[English]

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

Government Orders

(Division No. 100)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bellavance
Bevington	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Donnelly	Dorion
Duceppe	Dufour
Faille	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Godin	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	Hughes
Julian	Laforest
Laframboise	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Ménard	Mulcair
Nadeau	Ouellet
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Rafferty
Savoie	Siksay
St-Cyr	Stoffer
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Vincent— 77	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Arthur
Ashfield	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Bélanger	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannis	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Cotler
Crombie	Cummins
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Fletcher
Folco	Footé

Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Généreux	Glover
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Holland
Jean	Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayer	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
McTeague	Mendes
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Poilievre
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Rodriguez
Rota	Russell
Savage	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Valeriotte	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Volpe	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilfert
Wong	Woodworth
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Young	Zarac— 200

PAIRED

Members

Beaudin	Cannon (Pontiac)
Finley	Flaherty
Lalonde	Mourani
Roy	Verner— 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed from October 7 consideration of Bill C-290, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the report stage of Bill C-290 under private members' business. The question is on the motion.

• (1825)

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

*(Division No. 101)***YEAS**

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bellavance
Bevington	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coderre	Comartin
Crowder	Cullen
D'Amours	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Donnelly	Dorion
Duceppe	Dufour
Faille	Folco
Freeman	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	
Hughes	Julian
Laforest	Laframboise
Lavallée	Layton
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Ménard
Mulcair	Nadeau
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Patry
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Proulx	Rafferty
Rodriguez	Savoie
Siksay	Simms
St-Cyr	Stoffer
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Vincent — 85	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Abłonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison

Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Arthur	Ashfield
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Bélangier
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Cotler	Crombie
Cummins	Cuzner
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dhaliwal
Dion	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Fast
Fletcher	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Généreux	Glover
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Holland
Jean	Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
McTeague	Mendes
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Paradis
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Poillievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Regan	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Rota	Russell
Savage	Saxton
Schellenberger	Sgro
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Silva
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Valeriotte
Van Kesteren	Van Loan

Private Members' Business

Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wong
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

Volpe
Warawa
Watson
Woodworth
Yelich
Zarac— 186

PAIRED

Members

Beaudin
Finley
Lalonde
Roy

Cannon (Pontiac)
Flaherty
Mourani
Verner— 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to register my support for Bill C-290.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to have the member's vote cast in favour?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed from October 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-386, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-386 under private members' business.

● (1835)

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

(Division No. 102)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bélangier
Bevington
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle
Carrier
Chow
Coderre
Cotler
Cullen
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Dewar
Dhalla
Dorion
Dufour
Eyking
Folco
Freeman
Gagnon
Gaudet

André
Ashton
Atamanenko
Bagnell
Bellavance
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Cummins
D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers
Desnoyers
Dhaliwal
Donnelly
Duceppe
Easter
Faille
Foote
Fry
Gagneau
Godin

Guay
Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Kania
Laforest
Lavallée
LeBlanc
Leslie
Lévesque
Malo
Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Ménard
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Nadeau
Pacetti
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Patry
Plamondon
Proulx
Rodriguez
Savoie
Silva
St-Cyr
Thi Lac
Tonks
Valerioté
Volpe
Zarac— 113

Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Julian
Kennedy
Laframboise
Layton
Lemay
Lessard
MacAulay
Maloway
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
McTeague
Mulcair
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Ouellet
Paillé (Hochelaga)
Paquette
Pearson
Pomerleau
Rafferty
Russell
Siksay
Simms
Stoffer
Thibeault
Trudeau
Vincent
Watson

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Bains
Benoit
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brison
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Dechert
Devolin
Dreeshen
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Fast
Galipeau
Généreux
Goodyear
Grewal
Hall Findlay
Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Holland
Jennings
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lee
Lobb
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Armstrong
Ashfield
Baird
Bernier
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Cadman
Calkins
Cannis
Casson
Clarke
Crombie
Day
Del Mastro
Dion
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Gourde
Guergis
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Lemieux
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McColeman
McLeod

Private Members' Business

Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Murray	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Paradis	Payne
Petit	Poilievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Regan	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Rota	Saxton
Schellenberger	Sgro
Shea	Shiple
Shory	Simson
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young— 153	

PAIRED

Members

Beaudin	Cannon (Pontiac)
Finley	Flaherty
Lalonde	Mourani
Roy	Verner— 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being 6:35 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

SECURE, ADEQUATE, ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-304, An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP) moved that Bill C-304, An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians, as amended, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Libby Davies moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak at third reading stage of Bill C-304, An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians.

There has been tremendous support for this bill right across the country. Yesterday on Parliament Hill many folks came out with their red tents. They were taking part in a campaign organized by the red tent campaign to end homelessness in Canada. Rallies were held yesterday in Halifax, Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, and right across the country. The reason was because people know that there is a housing crisis in this country, whether in large cities or smaller communities.

Anybody involved in the housing business, average people on the street, will tell us about people they know who are homeless. They will tell us about families they know who are paying 50% or 60% of their income in rent. They cannot find an affordable place to live. They will tell us about people who are threatened with eviction.

About three million Canadians live in what we call housing insecurity. One of the reasons we have this predicament is because we do not have a national strategy and a national framework around affordable housing in this country.

Canada has had a history of good housing programs, but many of those programs have been lost. I do not want to go into the history of that today because we do not have time.

Suffice it to say that the efforts that we have made have been piecemeal. Even the money in the last budget that was related to the recession was only one time stimulus money for housing and that money is not getting into the local communities. There has been a real vacuum in this country. There has been a social deficit around a housing plan. People understand that.

This bill is very straightforward and clear. It calls on the federal government, in partnership with the provinces, the territories, first nations, municipalities and stakeholders, to develop a strategy that could take us forward and move us into a situation where we have a real plan with objectives, targets, outcomes, and deliverables. That is why so many people have signed on in support of this bill.

The list of organizations that are supporting this bill is really quite phenomenal. The organizations are non-partisan and are located across the country. The list includes: ACORN Canada, Amnesty International Canada, Assembly of First Nations, Campaign 2000, Canada Without Poverty, Canadian AIDS Society, Canadian Association of Social Workers, Canadian Federation of University Women, Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, Citizens for Public Justice, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, National Aboriginal Housing Association, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Social Rights Advocacy Centre, Wellesley Institute, and YWCA.

These are national organizations and they represent millions of people in this country. These organizations have signed on to support this bill because they know that work needs to be done. They know that the federal government needs to take a leadership role in bringing the partners together in developing a plan.

Private Members' Business

I am proud that in my own community in Vancouver East, where this began, key organizations like Pivot Legal Society and the Citywide Housing Coalition did a lot of organizing to support this bill. I want to thank those individuals who have worked so hard to bring this bill now to third reading in the House.

• (1840)

I would also like to thank my colleagues in the House from the Bloc, the Liberal Party, and there have even been some Conservatives who have supported the bill. The support across the House, across parties, is a reflection of the work that has been done at the grassroots. Right across the country there has been tremendous campaigns to contact members of Parliament to let them know about the bill and the work that needs to be done.

I am very hopeful that this broad support will continue for the bill. I would like to thank the members who have supported the bill and say that we can move this forward. We can realize an achievable plan. We can get the federal government to work with the partners across the country to truly develop a national strategy that builds on the success that we have had in provinces.

The province of Quebec has a tremendous housing program. It can build on the success that we have had in local communities because many municipalities have done tremendous work in providing affordable housing. However, we will not get where we need to be unless we have the federal government showing that political leadership.

I have seen letters from the government saying, "Do not worry. We are doing what needs to be done". Unfortunately, that is not the case. All of these organizations recognize that is not the case, otherwise they would not be supporting the bill.

I want to suggest to members today that we can move the bill forward. We can adopt the kind of strategy that we need and we can say that housing is a fundamental right. We can say that wherever we live in this country, we should have access to safe, appropriate, and affordable housing. No Canadian should be on the street destitute. No Canadians, no families, should worry about whether they can pay the rent, whether they will be evicted, or whether they are living in substandard housing that they cannot get upgraded. To me, this is just such a basic issue and it is the reason I ran in 1997, to bring forward the issue of the need for leadership from the federal government on housing.

Let us build on the programs that we used to have. Let us build on the success story that Canada was with social housing, co-op housing, and special needs housing. We did have tremendous programs. The bill does not actually create those programs. The bill creates the debate, the discourse, and the plan, led by the federal government in partnership with provinces and territories, first nations and municipalities to actually develop that strategy.

This is a very basic thing we need to take on, so again, I want to thank members for their support. We are now at a very critical point in the bill. It has gone through second reading. It has gone through committee. We heard great witnesses. We made some changes to the bill and we are now at third reading.

Let us recognize the support that it has. Let us listen to our constituents. Let us listen to the people who are on the front line

every day, dealing with people who are in desperate situations and do not know where they will go. Let us listen to the people who are trying to find that affordable housing for families in large cities as well as in smaller communities.

We have a responsibility to do the right thing. The bill is not rocket science. It is not earth shattering. It is very straightforward. It is very clear. It is calling on the federal government to work in a way that is delivering a mandate for those fundamental human needs.

I am very pleased that we are here debating Bill C-304 and look forward to what I hope will be ongoing support from the members of the House to make the bill a reality.

• (1845)

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for the work she has done on the bill. I know she would acknowledge that members of the Liberal Party have been supportive of it and have helped to steer it through. I specifically reference the member for Parkdale—High Park who put in a number of serious amendments.

However, I want to ask her for a comment. One of the big issues in the fight against poverty and homelessness is the question of the cost of poverty and the cost of homelessness. I will reference a study that the hon. member would be familiar with which was commissioned by the British Columbia government in 2001. It is cited in the Senate report "In from the Margins: A call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness". It stated:

The study concluded, based on the experience of study participants, that costs for services for those who were homeless at the time of the study was 33% higher than for those who had been homeless but were then housed.

In other words, this is good economics as well as good social justice, and I wonder if she might just comment on that.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is entirely right and that study in British Columbia showed the economics of what is before us. I would also like to reiterate my thanks to the members of the Liberal Party who have supported the bill, both in committee and in other ways. I know they have had a keen interest to move the bill forward. I am very appreciative of that as I know many of the organizations are.

The fact is there has been so much research that has been done on housing issues to show what the astounding cost is of homelessness, both in terms of the impact on individuals, their lives and families, and local communities, but also the impact economically. The report the member cites from B.C. and others across the country show us that the cost of not housing people properly is enormous both socially and economically. This is something that we should pay attention to.

I have another report from SPARC B.C. and the CCPA B.C. office that shows that in B.C. alone there are more than 13,000 people on the waiting list. There are about 11,000 people who are absolutely homeless. The numbers are just staggering when we go community by community and it is a growing problem. We can look at this through the lens of human compassion. We can look at it through the lens of human rights. We can look at it through the lens of an economic cost. On all three counts it is clear that we need to do something much more and move forward on the bill.

Private Members' Business

• (1850)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Vancouver East has done a phenomenal job of bringing this forward. Hopefully the bill will receive the support of all four corners of the House.

However, I want to get back to the issue around the CCPA report and the modest amount of B.C. social housing that has been constructed more recently. Now of course as the member knows from Vancouver East virtually all of the funding for social housing in British Columbia over the last few years came from the famous NDP budget of 2005 federally where the tax cuts were rolled back and rolled into housing funding that eventually went through to the B.C. Liberal government and created housing units including in my riding of Burnaby—New Westminster.

I want to ask the member for Vancouver East to what extent she thinks the NDP budget of 2005 helped to address at least in a small part, this massive deficit of good quality accessible housing in the country?

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the budget allocation of \$1.5 billion was very key in ensuring a distribution across the country that some housing could be built. I know in British Columbia the small number that we did see actually came from Bill C-48, as we so well remember.

One thing that we have to remember is that when we have those transfers, we also need to have transparency because it is sometimes very hard to track where that money went. So again, part of a national strategy is to ensure that there is accountability. People want to know that housing dollars are going to housing. They want to know that it is actually getting into local communities. This has been one of the problems we have had with the economic stimulus money that, as we have heard from the government, is meant to go to housing. However, it is very difficult to track where it is ending up and whether or not the housing is being built.

The key thing is we need an ongoing commitment. The \$1.5 billion from that particular budget that the NDP was responsible for, we were very proud of that, but we want to see a program and a strategy that moves us forward in terms of a decade or more. We want to see a continuity in the housing supply and housing development, so that we do not fall into these deep crises in local communities where people end up not knowing where to go and what to do.

That is what we have to avoid. Bill C-48 was a good place to start. We have to now continue moving forward.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we are discussing Bill C-304, the NDP's bill for a national housing strategy.

It has been reviewed by committee and returned to the House with amendments, but it remains a fundamentally flawed piece of legislation.

The amendments proposed by the committee do nothing to alleviate the government's concerns with the bill.

The NDP members have gone to quite a bit of trouble to craft a bill just so. In fact, they had to take great care to ensure the bill did not run afoul of the rules of royal recommendation and they succeeded, barely.

They had to take all that care because they know as well as anyone that actual implementation of their national housing strategy will cost billions upon billions of extra dollars every year.

As the Speaker has ruled, this bill may go forward if it has sufficient support, but it is certainly not without cost. So, we will not indulge the opposition with that bold fiction. The truth is that the bill would cost us quite a lot and I think far too much.

Our country is still recovering from the recent recession. What it certainly does not need at this time is coalition-driven spending and tax increases, which is what would result with the passing of this bill. This is something they cannot deny.

It seems every time the opposition members speak, they are calling for billions in more spending and more tax increases.

To say they have some big ticket items in their policy hopper would grossly underestimate the price of those other items. As I said earlier, this bill is no different.

Mr. Peter Julian: Prisons, HST, fighter jets.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, it seems that the member across the way would like to debate whether or not people who commit violent offences on innocent civilians should go to jail.

I would be happy to debate with him why violent criminals should be behind bars and not on the streets of Canada, but I do not think that is what we are debating here right now. However, I will take him on that debate any time he wants. In fact, I will go to his own riding and debate it with him if he likes. I have no problem with standing up for justice. The member can heckle me if he wants. I am just going to continue talking about why this piece of legislation is as wrong-headed as virtually everything else we see coming from the NDP.

This bill calls for billions of dollars to be plucked out of thin air, magically—that is NDP math—and spent at the direction of the federal government in the area of fundamentally provincial jurisdiction. It would be interesting to see what the Bloc does with a bill that steps blindly into the provincial jurisdiction.

It is mind-boggling. Where do the NDP members think they are going to find the money if it is not in higher taxes? Governments do not have money. All they have is what they tax from Canadians. The NDP members do not understand that. We do not have the ability to create money. We do not have a magic money tree that we can get money from. The NDP members have a special mathematician who works with them who does wonders, I suppose.

They want to create a new bureaucracy but how do they think the federal bureaucracy can be as aware, as knowledgeable and as responsive as provincial and territorial governments that already work closely with us? Why do they think Ottawa knows better than our local, provincial and territorial governments and more than our local stakeholders, the people on the ground who understand the issues well?

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Even further, why do they think the government in general is the only solution? Why do they insist on one size fits all solutions? Fundamentally, the answers to these questions come down to ideology. The left-wing, tax and spend, money is no object ideology of the NDP often, and frankly really often, is supported in Parliament by the Liberals and the leftist Bloc, the coalition. That is their ideology. That is what is behind this bill: higher taxes and more spending is the only solution.

This bill, through the implementation of its strategy, would require billions in increased taxes, which is no different from any of their other proposals. In fact, I am not even sure the opposition members have any idea exactly how much the bill would actually cost, and they certainly do not know how to pay for it, apart from unspecified need for higher taxes.

I do not think they particularly care that the money needs to come from somewhere and that that somewhere is the pockets of hard-working Canadians. The price tag for their ideology and for the bill is, in this case, unaffordable.

● (1855)

They live in a bubble. Do they not watch the news and see the difficult decisions that governments are making right now? They continue to bring irresponsible, uncosted bills before Parliament and suggest that it is somehow responsible. It is not responsible. They bring forward uncosted bills that impact the Canadian books to the tune of billions of dollars of new spending and suggest that they are there to help people. The outcome of this would be less employment, fewer jobs, less opportunity, more people homeless and higher taxes. That would be the outcome. They do not understand economics.

Mr. Speaker, their heckling is really quite encouraging, so I would ask that you not do anything to curb the NDP's heckles because I am really quite enjoying it.

We can and do debate the merits and wisdom of policy choices. What I am talking about is a pure spending aspect, especially given the financial circumstances of the global economy and of the Canadian economy. The spending envisioned by the implementation of this bill cannot reasonably be seen as anything but reckless.

The coalition may not care about sane financial policy, but our government does. We simply cannot afford to start throwing billions of dollars around without a care. That is what this bill is instructing us to do.

It is remarkable. I am not that old, but I have been around a little while and I can say that right now there is a significant number of affordable housing projects going on from coast to coast. That is because this government made it a priority to invest in affordable housing, to renew the housing stock, build new units, invest from one community to another from coast to coast in each and every territory and province, and to invest in aboriginal housing on and off reserve. We have made these investments.

The one remarkable consistency is that the movers of this bill, the irresponsible economists of the NDP that I am listening to right now, they are the ones who voted against all those measures. Any affordable housing that is being built, any improvement to the housing stock, the people who are being lifted out of poverty, the jobs that have been protected, the special measures in EI, all of these

things that have been done, that have guided the Canadian economy through unprecedented difficulties—in fact, we have not seen a downturn like this since the 1930s—this government moved to protect them and the NDP voted against all of that, including the measures for homelessness.

There is a new YWCA shelter in Peterborough that protects vulnerable women. It got funding from some of these programs. Let us remember that the NDP voted against it.

Then those members stand in this House and suggest that their ideology is quite different from ours and they want to help people. We have been there to help people, and we have done so in a financially responsible way.

The fact is federal support for housing is very robust. Our support is multi-pronged and our current system respects the jurisdiction, different needs and circumstances of our provinces and territories, something this irresponsible NDP bill would not do.

I talked earlier about how their own inflexible ideology causes problems. When all they want is more spending and more programs, they drown out reality. They drown out innovations that could be much more effective than simply more money, more programs, more taxes, more government and—

● (1900)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order. The hon. member has just over a minute left and I am having an increasingly difficult time hearing what he is saying. I see some side conversations. If other members want to have other conversations, maybe they could sit a little bit closer so members on this end of the chamber could hear what the parliamentary secretary is saying.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, it is remarkable that when we talk about financial irresponsibility and tax-and-spend, which is something I think they would be proud of, judging by the bills they bring in, when it is pointed out how financially irresponsible and wrong-headed the NDP is, they get all excited. They do not like being called on it.

The reality is there is no magic money tree in Ottawa. The NDP believes that there is, that we can create money out of thin air or they would not bring irresponsible bills like this to the House. Similarly, when they call for more spending and more programs, they distract Canadians from clear thinking. This certainly hurts more than it helps.

The opposition's solution is this bill, a new layer of bureaucracy and taxes and spending. It would take the form of direct cash transfers and incentives and building more spending and more programs, but they ignore the fact that one of the best ways to increase the amount of money that Canadians have in their pockets for themselves and their families is action through the tax system.

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Lower taxes increase take-home income. Our government has brought in tax measures to help people who need it, the working income tax benefit, WITB. Mr. Speaker, it is regrettable that my time is coming to a close, because I have so many things to talk about that our government has done.

The Deputy Speaker: We could always see if there is unanimous consent to give the parliamentary secretary more time, but we will resume debate with the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-304. The Liberal Party has supported Bill C-304 from the beginning.

Like many private members' bills, the bill has had issues and challenges. I am very pleased that the Liberal Party has strengthened the bill. I want to commend the work of a number of Liberals on the committee. I have been at the committee and we have been very supportive. I want to commend my colleague from Parkdale—High Park who has brought forward amendments to this bill that make this bill more applicable to persons with disabilities, that bring not for profits to the table in a stronger way, that set targets and standards and take into account strengthened environmental needs of affordable social housing in the country.

This is a way that we have worked to make sure that this bill is even better, but we support the bill. We want this bill to pass. We think this bill is important. Contrary to what the parliamentary secretary was implying, we think this is a very strong bill from an economic point of view.

This bill does not require a royal recommendation. It is about having a housing strategy and governments would make choices about what would be included in a housing strategy. There are recommendations in this bill, but first and foremost, it says that we should have some kind of a national strategy on affordable housing. I think most people would agree with that. Certainly the people in the not for profit community, many economists, many social scientists, people from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, who have become more and more involved in the need for affordable housing, would echo the sentiment that this is a bill that has real potential to make a difference in Canada.

I want to speak about the need for affordable housing. I referenced earlier a Senate report. My colleague from Sault Ste. Marie in the NDP, my colleague from Chambly—Borduas in the Bloc and others on the government side who have been part of an anti-poverty strategy would know some of this, but the Senate released a report on poverty and homelessness in December. The House of Commons has a report that is ready to go, but as it is only in draft form, I will not quote from that. I will, however, quote from the Senate report.

The Senate report opens a section on homelessness by saying:

The most visible sign of the failure of our income security and housing systems and programs to meet the basic needs of individuals and families is homelessness. By definition, homelessness is difficult to measure, but witness after witness reported increases in demand for shelters and food banks, even among those who are employed.

It goes on to reference a specific study in British Columbia, but it is echoed by other studies across the country. I will quote again:

The study concluded, based on the experience of participants, that costs for services for those who were homeless at the time of the study was 33% higher than for those who had been homeless but were then housed.

In other words, it costs money to have people homeless. It is a classic lose-lose situation.

My colleague from Yukon gave me a very good report the other day from the Wellesley Institute. I want to quote from its introduction:

People's ability to find, and afford, good quality housing is crucial to their overall health and wellbeing and is a telling index of the state of a country's social infrastructure.

I do not think anything could be more true than that. There are a lot of people who need more affordable housing who could benefit from a national housing strategy. One of the groups that would most benefit is people with disabilities.

In April or May, a press release came out from the Council of Canadians With Disabilities, from Marie White, the national chairperson. She is one of the great advocates in this country on social issues, not just on people with disabilities but on many other things as well. She calls on all parties to support Bill C-304:

Adequate housing is essential to the well being of persons with disabilities.... Canadians with disabilities disproportionately live in poverty and finding affordable housing is a huge challenge.

One of the great advocates for disability issues in this country is Steve Estey, who lives in my community of Dartmouth. He was a negotiator when Canada went to the United Nations to work on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. If he were here today, Steve would point out to us how important it is to recognize our international obligations to people with disabilities, the part of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities regarding the right to housing, and the important need that we have to provide that housing to people with disabilities.

There is another issue that I want to mention briefly. People are concerned about housing, not just for the really poor, to whom we really need to be responsive, but many other Canadians are awfully nervous and are not that far away themselves from having issues regarding decent shelter.

● (1905)

I want to provide a statistic from RBC Economics in September. It stated, "Today the typical Canadian family must devote 49% of its income to own a standard two-storey home while mortgage rates are at their lowest point". Another statistic was that 58% of Canadians are concerned with their current level of debt, averaging \$41,470 per person. That means many people are not that far from being under-housed, at the very least, and perhaps even some being homeless.

The statistics and evidence of the need for housing is coming from all kinds of quarters. Recently TD Economics released a report on the Toronto area economy's hidden recession. It stated, "Looking ahead, little improvement in the jobless rate, social assistance case loads and social housing wait lists can be expected over the medium term".

The news is not really very positive. We need to take action on poverty overall, specifically homelessness. Let us look at the groups that have endorsed Bill C-304 recently such as the YWCA Canada, the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Canadian Federation of University Women, which is a fabulous organization. It has great advocacy. I happen to know that because my mother-in-law is an active member of the Canadian Federation of University Women and I would never go against her advice.

Other groups that endorse the bill include the Canadian Medical Association, Canada Without Poverty, the Red Tent campaign and the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association. As I mentioned, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has been very active on the need for getting into the housing business on a national level, bringing everybody to the table and asking what we can do, not just because it is an issue of social justice but because it is an issue of good economics as well.

I hosted a round table in my constituency last week, along with my colleague from Halifax, on palliative, or end of life care. We spent a lot of time talking about the importance of people choosing to die at home. Somebody stood and asked, "What about the people who don't have a home to die in?" When we think about the very basic needs of Canadians, one of the most important ones is that people have homes, not only where they can live but where they can die when that time is upon them.

In my constituency many times I visited the Metro Turning Point Shelter, where 70 or 80 men at a time live in one room. I think the beds are surplus prison beds. The men line up and spend the night there. We are all familiar with that in our constituencies. They go to the mission or, in our case, to Hope Cottage in the morning to get their meals. They wander around and return at night to try to get a bed. There is some really innovative stuff going on. We just need to encourage more of it.

Also in my constituency Affirmative Industries is an organization that has built housing for mental health consumers. Not only do people pay rent, but as part of the program they build up equity in those houses so eventually they actually have a few dollars invested. It gives them pride in home and when they leave, they have some place to go and a little money. More important, they have the dignity of knowing that it belongs to them.

We can do innovative things in housing. The Canadian Co-operative Housing Association has some fabulous projects that could benefit from the national housing strategy. There is no lack of ideas. There is a lack of a national strategy and commitment from the federal government. We need to do more.

On our federal anti-poverty hearings in the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, everybody who came, from Mike Kirby with the Mental Health Commission to

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people with disabilities, people from the aboriginal community, they all said the same thing. The first and most important step is to have a house. In Canada, where we pride ourselves on social infrastructure, we need to do better.

We can make the case purely from a social justice argument, but we can also make it from an economic argument. There is more and more evidence telling us that if people have a house, they are less of a burden on the health, justice and social welfare systems. This is where we have to go. It is time that we have some kind of national system that looks at this really important issue and asks if we can do better, if people in Canada should be housed, if everyone should have shelter. If they should, they can start here and this bill can play an important role.

We are happy to have made it better. We congratulate the member for Vancouver East for bringing it this far and we hope the House sees fit to adopt it.

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the subject of social housing. I noticed earlier—and this is where I will begin—that our Conservative colleague does not understand the first thing about social housing. He knows nothing about the money that could be invested in it. He does not realize that social housing does not cost so much in reality. We are currently paying for people who are living in the street. We are paying to look after them. We are paying for their well-being and we are paying huge bills for their health. All that costs much more than social housing would. The Conservative colleague does not understand the math. He understands absolutely nothing about it.

The Bloc Québécois believes that social and affordable housing is needed across Canada, which necessarily includes Quebec. Why does UNESCO regularly say that Canada is a rich country that does not take care of its least fortunate and does not build social housing, when my colleague says that social housing is not necessary and that it constitutes reckless spending? "Reckless" is the word he used earlier. I think he has never been to the many poor neighbourhoods in Canada. I have gone into Canada's cities and I have seen where first nations people live and I have seen the housing conditions. It is awful. Some places are scary and people live in the street. According to the Wellesley Institute, as my colleague was saying earlier, if they are not living in the street, they are paying a lot of money in places like Toronto. My colleague was saying that people spend up to 85% of their meagre income on housing for the sake of their children. How are they supposed to have enough left over for food? They become sick and then the government ends up paying to keep them alive and well.

It is such a mistake not to realize that we need social housing immediately. Furthermore, I do not understand how the Liberal Party could have put an end to that in 1991. Not to mention the fact that children who are homeless and raised on the street are not being educated. They are living in poverty. What is the best crime school? Poverty. The main motive for crime is poverty. The Conservatives are always talking about law and order. Yet they have no problem letting people live in poverty. It is unbelievable.

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The Bloc Québécois has always defended and will always defend social housing. I am not sure if all the groups that support Bill C-304 are aware that this government will not want to implement it. Do those groups realize that even if the Conservatives do implement it, studies will drag on for years before there is any money for social housing.

Money is needed right now, which is precisely why I introduced another bill, even though the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-304, which would provide a much-needed strategy. Canada lags behind when it comes to social housing.

The purpose of Bill C-304 is to establish a national housing strategy. There is the problem, since Quebec already has a strategy. The Société d'habitation du Québec is handling all the needs quite well. What we do need, however, is money. We would have liked this bill to include full compensation from the beginning, and a real opportunity to get out of this situation. If that had been the case, we could have supported it immediately. However, although it is not yet a done deal, we still have hope.

•(1915)

The Bloc has always taken a constructive approach to this bill, which is not ours, but it believes the bill would serve as a wake-up call for the public, even though it would not necessarily provide any money. What we really want is compensation, though. Every region and every first nation has its own needs, and Quebec is no exception.

Quebec has developed widely recognized expertise. Earlier, I quoted the Wellesley Institute, which says that Quebec is ahead of all the other provinces because it has the Société d'habitation du Québec, which puts up energy-efficient buildings and has the same standards that UNESCO claims to have. We are not saying that the rest of Canada should not have such a body. We agree that the rest of Canada should have one. All we are asking is that this bill provide a way to recognize our own institutions. Then, Quebec would agree to let the rest of Canada come up with its own strategy.

I move, seconded by the member for Chambly—Borduas, who is present here today, that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word “That” and substituting the following:

Bill C-304, An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians, be not now read a third time but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for the purpose of reconsidering Clauses 3 and 4, or to add new Clauses, with a view of clarifying the role of provinces, specifically Quebec, within the jurisdiction of the Bill.

•(1920)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order. The debate will be on the amendment.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the amendment for the simple reason that Bill C-304 itself is so fundamentally important. The amendment must be treated at committee and then the bill can be brought back and receive a majority of support from members of Parliament.

Why is that important? We are dealing with a fundamental national crisis, as members well know. Tonight, there will be upwards of 150,000 Canadians who will be sleeping in parks, on main streets and in homeless shelters. Up to four million more, as the member for Vancouver East said so eloquently just a few moments ago, are families that are on the margin. These are families that are living from paycheque to paycheque as to whether or not they can actually keep their home. They have to make those tough choices every day between paying the rent and feeding the kids. This is a fundamental reality in Canada today. This is a land of so much wealth and richness, and yet we have millions of families that are on the cusp of becoming homeless and tens of thousands of Canadians who are living in the streets of our cities. This is a national shame.

If this Parliament cannot deal with the crisis that exists in housing in this country, then to say the least, we have to wonder about the priorities of this House. This has to be the number one priority. This is why we are supporting the amendment. This is why, of course, we are supporting the bill brought forward by the member for Vancouver East.

When I was growing up in the 1970s in Burnaby—New Westminster, my English grandmother, who was an orphan and as a teenager travelled halfway across the world to come to Canada because she wanted to start a new life, used to tell me about the Great Depression. She used to say that in this city, in this community, there were dozens of people living on the streets. She used to say, back in the 1970s, how wonderful it was that in Canada no one had to sleep outside anymore.

And yet we know what happened in the 1990s when a former government, a Liberal government, decided to balance the budget. It did so not on the backs of the wealthy, the pampered and the privileged, who had the resources to absorb perhaps a bit of sacrifice for this country, but on the backs of the middle class and on the backs of the poorest of Canadians. That is the fundamental reality that we live with today, that those decisions made in the 1990s have led to this housing crisis, this affordability of housing crisis that exists in our country today.

Families are obliged to pay more than half of their income just to try to keep a roof over their heads, families like those who live in my riding of Burnaby—New Westminster, in the area around Richmond Park. When I knock on their door and ask them what their priorities are, they say they wish that they could have affordable housing, that they could feel comfortable that, in a month or two or three, they will still be able to pay the rent with their decreasing income and the struggles they have. Whether people are laid off because of disability or whether they have lost their jobs, they are struggling to keep a roof over their heads. They are all frightened about what tomorrow may bring, that they may be sleeping in the parks and on main streets like so many other Canadians.

When we go to the east coast, to areas like Tracadie-Sheila in northern New Brunswick, we see families that are struggling to try to keep a roof over their heads. I am pleased to see that among the many endorsers of this bill we have the mayor and the municipal council of Tracadie-Sheila. When we go to the far north to Pond Inlet, as I did two years ago, we see a one-bedroom home inhabited by 15 or 20 members of a family, in the sub-zero temperatures and the darkness, because there is not adequate housing available.

Anyone who is out travelling the length and breadth of this country must be aware of the severity of the crisis and the impact it has on ordinary Canadian families and ordinary Canadians' lives. It is very difficult for people to concentrate on schooling or improving themselves or retraining when they are just struggling to keep a dry roof over their heads.

● (1925)

Those who have fallen out of that, who have fallen into the streets, who have to live in the homeless shelters, who have to live through that daily struggle just to get enough food together, they will not be able to think about retraining or their contribution to this country. They are just trying to survive. That is the fundamental reality that exists today for tens of thousands of Canadians, and there are millions of Canadian families who are just on the edge.

Today we have the member for Vancouver East bringing forward a housing plan that actually starts to address that issue, a very important first step that forces the federal government to sit down with stakeholders and community groups and move forward and put back into place what we never should have lost in the first place: the right to housing that should exist in this country.

The bill has been endorsed by a wide spectrum of society. It has been endorsed by the medical profession: the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Nurses Association; by the labour movement; by the business associations as well: the Burnaby Board of Trade and the Victoria Chamber of Commerce; by cities across the length and breadth of this country; by churches and faith groups; by the labour movement; by women's groups; by aboriginal organizations.

I have not seen, in the six and a half years I have been in the House, a more complete list of endorsers who are all saying with one voice to every single one of us, all 308 members of Parliament, that we must adopt the bill. They are doing that because they are aware of the depth of the crisis, of the national shame that is homelessness in Canada today. In a rich and wealthy land, so many have to go without that fundamental right to housing.

I heard earlier a member of the Conservative Party saying that this will cost Canadians to have housing. What an absurd concept, particularly from a government that has been so wasteful with the public purse, building prisons for unreported crime, building fake lakes for 72-hour meetings, putting in tens of billions of dollars in corporate tax cuts to banks so they can take their money down to the Bahamas or Panama, and perhaps most egregiously now with the fighter jet contract that has doubled in price, not taking a look at that, not trying to even go to any sort of tendering process. Billions and billions and billions of dollars are wasted, yet the government, or at least that Conservative member who stood up, is somehow resenting the fact that to put a national program back into place may cost some money.

The reality is that, for each and every homeless Canadian, the costs to our economy and the costs to those communities are enormous. The report that was cited earlier said it totals \$55,000 in emergency medical costs and social costs to keep somebody on the street. It is absurd that Canadian taxpayers have to pay to make sure we do not have a national housing program.

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The Conservatives might say they have established this gated community principle of building prisons. The average cost of keeping prisoners in prison is about \$200,000 a year. To say that those are more important expenditures than making sure all Canadians have access to housing, all Canadians have a roof over their heads, all Canadians can then turn their tasks to contributing to this country, to help build this country, to help contribute to their community is absurd. To say that somehow it is more important to keep people on the street at \$55,000 annually than to build housing units that cost a fraction of that amount is an absurdity that I think most Canadians can see through in a moment.

The truth is that we have the resources. The truth is that what we need is a commitment. The member for Vancouver East has brought forward a bill that finally deals with our national shame after 20 years. She brings it forward with the support of the business community, of the aboriginal community, of labour activists, of people across the length and breadth of Canada. All those organizations, the dozens of them that have endorsed this bill, are crying out with one voice tonight, and they are crying out to implore parliamentarians to vote yes on the bill, to vote yes on Bill C-304 and to start the process of ending homelessness in this land.

We can do this in the next few days. I implore all members of Parliament to hear these voices and vote yes on the bill.

● (1930)

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to address this bill today. I want to congratulate my colleague opposite for his impassioned speech. While it may be devoid of certain facts and principles, it was a very passionate speech.

I would like to compliment the Deputy Speaker for the work he does in the Regina area on housing and homelessness. I have relatives in the Deputy Speaker's constituency who talk about the great work he has done on homelessness and housing and the great work our government has done by providing 625,000 homes to the underprivileged.

I am told by my relatives that the Deputy Speaker talks often about the importance of a job as the best thing that one can truly do for somebody. My first nations constituents, constituents who live in northern Alberta, people who are scraping to get by, people in this country who work two and three jobs are looking first of all for jobs and then higher paying jobs. That is exactly what our government has been providing for the last four and a half years. Unfortunately, that member has opposed most of these things.

If we are going to talk about groups of people who are scraping to get by and are threatened with homelessness day after day, we have generational farms in my area that face some of this. These farmers tell me day in and day out that they need more markets. They need to expand access to other parts of the country for their cattle and hogs. The Deputy Speaker has this in the Qu'Appelle Valley as well.

The problem I have with the member is that he has consistently opposed free trade. I would like to get off topic for a second and talk about that member and the NDP. This is not about Conservatives. This is not about Liberals. This is not about the NDP—

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• (1935)

Ms. Libby Davies: No. It's about housing.

Mr. Brian Storseth: This is not partisan, Mr. Speaker. This is about people's homes. This should be about people's jobs, about the economy. We do not need heckling and ranting from the other side. This should be an impassioned debate and a respectful debate by both sides.

In my area people talk about free trade. They talk about the importance of a Canada-Colombia free trade agreement, the importance of a Canada-Panama free trade agreement. We cannot have members of the NDP consistently blocking these important initiatives for agriculture and for many other areas and sectors in our country, but in my community, particularly agriculture. These are men and women, farmers, who are struggling to get by, who are—

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think you can hear that the member is not talking about Bill C-304 at all. Bill C-304 talks about affordable housing and the member is talking about free trade. It has absolutely nothing to do with what we are supposed to be talking about here.

The Deputy Speaker: I will urge the hon. member for Westlock—St. Paul to remember that this is debate on an amendment to a motion at third reading. The Standing Orders and the usual practice of the House are usually very strict on keeping one's remarks as close as possible to the substance before the House.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Speaker, I will try to keep my remarks as close as possible, but I think my remarks are about homelessness. They are about this amendment. The problem is that the NDP members do not see that. They do not see how important it is that Canadians' number one priority is the economy, flat out. If they are not listening to that, then they are not listening to Canadians. It is the economy, and the economy has a direct impact on homelessness. I think we can all agree on that.

I would like to move forward and talk about the oil sands for a second and how they absolutely affect—

The Deputy Speaker: I think I know what the member for Burnaby—New Westminster will be raising. Perhaps we can revisit this the next time the bill is before the House. We are getting toward the end of the hour for private members' business. If it is all right with the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, I will move on to adjournment proceedings unless he is raising another issue. The member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I just wanted to know what time warp the member was in, speaking about the oil sands and free trade. This is about housing.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the member for Westlock—St. Paul will remember that the next time this bill is before the House.

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my beloved Canada once had an international reputation as a green country with progressive environmental policies, but Canada walked away from its Kyoto Protocol targets. Canadian per capita emissions are 22.8 tonnes of carbon dioxide, which is double that of Norway and the United Kingdom, six times higher than citizens of China and 14 times higher than citizens of India.

Tim Flannery, author of *The Weather Makers* confirms the data, “Canada is by far the biggest defaulter on its Kyoto obligations on a tonnage basis. And as a result of that there is a lack of trust”.

The Conservative government likes to blame past governments, but four years after coming to power, it has yet to deliver a climate plan. It introduced three proposals to limit emissions from major polluters, but failed to implement any of them.

Another failure is, during the economic crisis, the government should have looked for a triple win, renewable stimulus, with positive impacts on the economy, jobs and the atmosphere. It should not have been viewed as a rescue package, but rather a survival package. President Obama invested \$50 billion for green jobs. The United Kingdom invested \$1.5 billion. Germany invested \$13.8 billion. China invested \$221 billion, or 110 times that of the U.K.

The government has repeatedly emerged as an obstacle to international climate negotiations, ignoring science and thus winning one “fossil award” after another.

As a result, study after study ranks Canada last or almost last in terms of global warming. The 2008 Climate Change Performance Index ranked Canada 56th out of 57 countries in terms of tackling emissions, ahead of only Saudi Arabia.

The 2009 assessment of G8 countries by Allianz ranked Canada last.

The 2010 Simon Fraser University and David Suzuki Foundation study show Canada with the second worst environmental record of OECD countries, ranking 24th out of 25 countries. Only the United States ranks lower.

The latter study shows that Canada's cold climate, large size and heavy reliance on natural resource industries do not explain Canada's poor performance. In fact, Dr. Gunton reports:

The traditional explanations for Canada's poor performance are simply not valid... These so-called natural disadvantages are offset by a major natural advantage we have over other countries—the availability of low polluting hydro power.

The government's weak policies are in fact behind Canada's poor environmental record.

Adjournment Proceedings

The government must understand that climate change is not just an environmental issue, but rather a human rights issue, the right to live, an international security issue and a justice issue, and that is the ones who are suffering most had the least responsibility for it.

In any struggle, it is important to listen to the front-line voice, the canary in the coal mine, for example, aboriginal people, those living in low-lying states in Arctic. If people are impacted by climate change they should be meaningfully involved in Canada's process and negotiations. The government must be accountable to those impacted.

It is important for the government to realize that individuals are making change in their own lives and they want change on the national and international stage. When developing climate change policy or negotiating international deals, it is important for the government to ask if this is something my children would be proud of.

We have to negotiate for our children who are not here. We have to accept moral responsibility for the defining issue of our generation, as past generations did when they fought in the Great Wars.

• (1940)

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her comments, but it was not relevant to what she had said in question period. Her question related to the G8 and G20, so my answer will relate to the question that she asked.

As far as the canary in the coal mine, I remind her that climate change has been not within the last few years, but it has been a long time, a decade, and it was her leader who said her party made an absolute mess. He questioned why they did not get it done, and that question is still yet to be answered.

The Liberals have said that if they would have had another chance, if Canadians would have elected them again, then they would have got it done, but they did not. They made a mess. However, I will answer her question relating to what we have done at the G20 and the G8.

The G8 summit focused on improving the health of women and children in the world's poorest regions, while the G20 summit focused on economic issues such as financial sector reform, stimulus programs and the global trade and growth strategies. However, there was a G8 consensus that the summit provide political support for global action on climate change for the ongoing UN climate change negotiations and for the full and effective implementation of the 2009 Copenhagen accord.

Accordingly climate change was featured in the leaders' agenda and in the G8 accountability report.

The G8 accountability report addressed climate change through commitments related to assisting the poorest and most vulnerable countries to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.

Canada's \$100 million contribution to the World Bank pilot project on climate change resilience announced at the 2008 francophonie summit in Quebec featured prominently in the G8 accountability report.

Canada's contribution was instrumental in helping to finance the development of the pilot program on climate resilience, which will fund programs in nine of the poorest and most vulnerable countries and two regions. I sure hope the member supports that.

Canada will continue to work constructively through all the international processes, including the G8 and the G20, to implement the Copenhagen accord and advance the negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change toward a fair, effective and comprehensive legally binding post-2012 agreement that is based on the Copenhagen accord.

Canada's commitment to provide fast track financing to support developing countries' mitigation and adaptation actions reflects our support for the Copenhagen accord.

I hope the Liberal Party does support the Copenhagen accord because that is the direction the world is going. Canada is doing more than its fair share. We are a world leader on action on climate change. It is too bad the Liberals did not take climate change seriously. They talk about the canary in the coal mine. Why did they not get it done?

• (1945)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, my comments were on topic. They were about economy and climate change, and the first IPCC report has gone 20 years.

I will refer to a true story about a young woman sitting in Westminster explaining to Commonwealth parliamentarians about her struggle to demonstrate the point. The rising sea level meant that saline water had stopped crops from growing in her home. Her husband then left her village to look for work in the forest where he was killed by a tiger. Her husband's family sent her back to live with her family. The family home was subsequently destroyed by a hurricane. The family stayed alive by living on an embankment. A month later the family was still on the embankment.

The monsoons are changing and new diseases are coming. She understands that these changes are not acts of God, but rather caused by other countries with big factories and big smoke. She asked of parliamentarians, "Big, important people, please do justice for us. There is no water to drink and our people are leaving our villages".

Canada must do better on climate change. The world depends on us.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, the member knows Canada is now doing much better under this Conservative government. Our government's commitment to the environment is unwaivering, it is moving forward, emissions are going down. We are working with our international partners.

Adjournment Proceedings

We signed on to the Copenhagen accord, so those dark days, when statements were being made about the environment, are over.

The mess the Liberals created is over. We are moving ahead on the environment. We are proud of our accomplishments and are working with our international partners.

INTERNATIONAL AID

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on June 1 before Parliament rose for the summer, I asked a question of the CIDA minister as to the funding with respect to CCIC and the minister said at the time that it was still under review. That is political speak around here for it is dead in the water. Already that decision had been taken. The drill question was when was it going to be executed.

As it turned out, a mere few weeks later while Parliament had risen and we were all off on summer vacation, the axe did fall on CCIC, the Canadian Council for International Co-operation. It is probably one of the most respected organizations in Canada, if not in the world, with respect to advocacy and with respect to research. Its research has been cited by numerous organizations around the world and 90 to 100 NGOs in this country depend upon both its research and its advocacy because it is a perfectly sensible thing.

Providing aid in this world is a complex and difficult undertaking. Therefore, we want to spend both the donor dollars and the government dollars as well as we possibly can. CCIC provided that very valuable service. It had been providing that very valuable service of research and advocacy for the last 30 years so that these 90 to 100 organizations did not have to have their own little shops to do it.

The budget cut was \$1.8 million, which is not a huge sum of money in the way the Conservatives government spends money, and it constituted over two-thirds of its budget.

CCIC knew the jig was up when it submitted request after request and it was told by staff that it is on the minister's desk. That also is political speak around here for it is also dead in the water.

Here we have it. A valuable organization that has been in existence for 30 years, that has a funding relationship going back all those years with various governments of Canada, of both the Conservative and Liberal stripe, is about to be axed and it is only a question of when.

I want to make the point that was made in an article with respect to CCIC. The headline is "Another critical group feels Ottawa's axe". It is an article by Brian Stewart regarding CCIC about a week after the axe did fall. He writes:

Foreign assistance is not just a matter of delivering help. It's also a highly complex matter of getting it right, if possible, through study, research, the exchange of ideas, co-ordination of plans, and, yes, open debate and criticism.

I know that is a foreign concept across the aisle. He continues:

This is the area the CCIC excelled in. It played a leadership role and set high standards.

The question remains that CCIC funding was cut in fact because its criticism was a little too pointed. The government does not like to hear from the other side. It certainly does not want to hear the

message and it certainly does not want to hear any message that is contrary to the propaganda put out by the other side.

May I end with the real reason that this organization was cut out of its funding.

For years, Barr and the CCIC have argued that CIDA's chronic attention-deficit disorder makes programming impossible when "based on themes that may have a half-life of six months."

"It's like planning next year's crop on the strength of this afternoon's weather", Barr says.

● (1950)

The Deputy Speaker: I have to stop the member there. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for the opportunity to be here in this House on this important issue. This is an issue that I care deeply and passionately about, and it is an issue that highlights the difference between the government's international aid policy and that of the opposition.

We here on the government side of the House look at the developing world and we see so many ways that we as a strong, prosperous nation can assist those who are less fortunate. The key behind the government's policy is the simple fact that action is needed for the world's poor, action will feed the hungry, action will reduce unnecessary deaths, and action will help developing nations help themselves.

As a government we care more about action than advocacy. I strongly believe that Canadians want our international aid funding to be spent internationally and on the world's poor. The member opposite is asking that Canada's international aid be spent here in Ottawa to pay for an organization that does not do any work on the ground to relieve poverty. The Liberals are asking the government to spend money that could be spent in the UN's world food program, and the Liberals want that money to go to Ottawa-based advocates instead.

I am honoured as parliamentary secretary for international aid for this government, a government that chooses action over advocacy. Our government is making our aid more effective. Our track record on international aid is spectacular.

The opposition Liberals play political games and try to twist the facts, but their words simply do not measure up to our government's action. We will take no lessons from the Liberals when it comes to our government's strong commitment to international aid.

This government will make certain that our international aid is spent effectively.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, that is indeed true. The government takes no lessons from anyone.

The reason it takes no lessons from anyone is that it pursues a policy of ignorance. It would prefer not to hear criticism. It would prefer not to actually have the facts. The census decision is a classic example. It would rather make its decisions based on ideology, prejudice and ignorance than on facts. That is what happened here.

Adjournment Proceedings

The government made its decision because it does not want to hear what CCIC, KAIROS, Rights & Democracy say, and a whole host of other organizations that have provided valuable assistance to the people of Canada and to the Government of Canada over the last 40 years.

The government talks about action. Their budgets were frozen in the last federal budget. It took \$5 billion off CIDA's budget. CIDA's budget is frozen for the next five years. How about spreading the money around in the UN? That really worked well. That is some action. It sure does not want to hear from anyone else.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Mr. Speaker, I cannot fathom why the member opposite thinks it is a good idea to take international food aid away so that an Ottawa lobbyist, who does no international aid work in the developing world, can receive a paycheque in Canada from our international aid budget.

The government is working to make our aid more effective. The opposition wants to see our international aid go to Ottawa lobbyists. Our government wants to see our international aid actually help the world's poor. That is why the government doubled our aid to Africa. That is why we doubled our total international aid to a record high of \$5 billion.

Our government is getting the job done. The opposition wants to spend the money for foreign aid on Ottawa lobbyists. We want to spend it where it has the most effect.

● (1955)

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

(The House adjourned at 7:55 p.m.)

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