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(HANSARD)

Friday, March 23, 2007

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 23, 2007

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1005)
[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from February 13 consideration of the motion that Bill C-35, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (reverse onus in bail hearings for firearm-related offences), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for North Vancouver.

It is an honour for me to rise in the House here today to discuss Bill C-35. I cannot understand why my Conservative friends on the other side continue to delay this bill becoming law.

I must point out that the Liberal Party has already gone a long way to putting in place laws to make the jobs of our men and women in uniform easier. I think of legislation like the anti-gangster law.

I would also like to point out that during the 13 years of the previous Liberal administration, we saw crime rates drop by more than 20% in some cases. This bill will only enhance those provisions that the Liberal Party has already provided.

Bill C-35 will make the streets safer by keeping criminals who use guns in prison, instead of out on bail to commit more crimes.

This is a bill I am proud to support and I cannot understand why my Conservative colleagues keep on postponing passage of this legislation.

This bill is designed to change the Criminal Code so that reverse onus will be required if an accused is charged of crimes with a gun. This bill will also be used against those charged with gun trafficking, possession for the purpose of trafficking or gun smuggling.

I would like to remind the House that it was the right hon. member for LaSalle—Émard who brought me into this political arena. In the 2006 election he supported the idea of reverse onus bail hearings for

gun related offences. I was proud to support this initiative with him then and I am proud to do so now.

The presumption of innocence and the right not to be denied bail without just cause are rights protected under the Charters of Rights and Freedoms. I firmly believe that this bill is in keeping with the spirit of the charter. It enhances our safety while still respecting our basic rights.

When I talk to people such as Chief Superintendent Fraser MacRae of the Surrey RCMP detachment or Chief Constable Jim Cessford of the Delta police department, I know how important is this legislation. I hear it everywhere from my constituents of Newton—North Delta. These voices from my riding of Newton—North Delta must be heard. It is so important that they be part of the process.

Why is the minority Conservative government not listening? These men and women, the ones on the street keeping us safe every day, are the ones who best understand what is needed to keep our homes, our families and our children safe. We must do all that we can to support them. That is why I am saddened by the cynical partisan games that the government is playing with such important legislation.

The official opposition has tried more than three times in the last six months to speed up many government bills dealing with justice issues. Each time the Conservative Party has shown that they are more interested in politicking than in actually passing their own legislation and making our families safer.

I would remind the House that it was my hon. colleague, the Liberal justice critic, who tabled a motion that proposed the immediate passing of four bills: Bill C-18, Bill C-22, Bill C-23 and Bill C-35, the very bill we are all here still debating today.

If it were not for this cynical government's obstruction, we could have sent all of this legislation to the Senate and put it on the fast track to becoming law. In one swoop we could have passed more than half of the government's entire justice agenda. We could have taken major steps in protecting our families and our communities, but the Conservative House leader raised a point of order to block the Liberal motion and caused more delays in passing serious anti-crime legislation.

Why will the government not take yes for an answer and pass its own legislation for the sake of our safety? The government knows that a majority of MPs in the House of Commons want to pass these bills and the government will just not stop dragging its feet.

Government Orders

The fact that the government is blocking its own legislation proves that it is not serious about crime. It only wants to use these bills as an election issue, not as a way to make our neighbours and communities safer. The Canadian people deserve better. They deserve a government that will not play politics with the Criminal Code.

The late Pierre Trudeau said, “just watch me”. Well, the Canadian people are watching. The people of the riding of Newton—North Delta are watching. The people are watching the government play politics with the safety of our children and families. Canadians and the good people of my riding of Newton—North Delta deserve better. They deserve a government and a leader who will put the safety of our families ahead of politics.

When I look at the justice platform put forward by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I have hope that the government might also finally get one. The Liberal Party has proposed a new plan, one that would have a major impact on the way we approach safety and justice in our country. It is not enough to simply talk tough on crime and then do nothing as the minority Conservative government has done so far.

We must deal with every aspect of fighting crime on our streets. We must work to prevent crime. We must work to make it easier for our police to catch criminals. When criminals are caught we must work to see them convicted through competent and quick administration. When they are convicted we must work to rehabilitate those criminals, so that when they get out of prison they do not commit more crimes.

I would encourage the government and all members of the Conservative Party to support the legislation and also support the Liberal idea to fast track those bills that I mentioned earlier. I encourage them to support our men and women in uniform who keep our streets safer and to support the official opposition when it has the guts to do what must be done to see this legislation pass to improve our safety and justice system.

We want no more delays, no more partisan politics and tactics, and no more games. Let us get the job done. Canadians are counting on us.

•(1010)

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member's speech. One of the themes that he kept talking about was that we should be fast tracking some bills and so on.

I am just amazed at this because we had a number of bills introduced by our previous minister of justice and now our present Minister of Justice on strengthening the criminal justice system, on making sure that people who are repeat offenders are dealt with properly, and making sure that, as in this bill, people who commit gun related crimes are dealt with severely and quickly.

The member is pleading for us to fast track this legislation. As a matter of fact, it is the opposition that is preventing us from getting these bills through in a timely fashion. It is the opposition that is bringing in a bunch of amendments to our bills.

I was talking to some people in the riding last week. I told them these guys with their amendments are gutting the bills and then they

are trying to serve us the guts. We want to have a real meaningful and workable plan to solve the criminal justice system.

I would like the member to simply give a commitment that he will help us, today for example, finish Bill C-35 and that we can get on with this. It is a very important agenda for the Canadian people.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, the member asked for my commitment. I certainly will be supporting this bill and will do anything possible on my part to help pass this legislation.

However, I would also remind the hon. member that if he was in the House the other day, the hon. critic for justice brought in a motion to speed up the legislation that I mentioned: Bill C-18, the DNA identification bill that would help police solve many missing persons cases; Bill C-22, the age of consent bill that would have made our children, our sons and daughters, safer; Bill C-23, the criminal procedures bill, a bill that would help to make our justice system more efficient; and Bill C-35, the reverse onus bill that we are debating today.

In fact, if the hon. member were here, he would have noticed that the House leader on the Conservative side raised a point of order not to support that option that we brought in to speed up not only one of those bills, but four of them.

I was in Surrey last month, where the mayor of Surrey along with all the stakeholders put a crime prevention strategy in place. In six months they are much further ahead of where we are today with the Conservative government delaying and playing politics. So, I would ask the hon. member to ask the House leader and his Conservative colleagues to support and get those bills passed so we can protect our streets.

•(1015)

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, I would like to just follow up on this. I am not on the justice committee and I do not follow all of the minute details of these different bills as they go through the process, but it seems to me that a number of the bills that the member mentioned had some amendments applied to them in committee.

Mr. Paul Szabo: There are no amendments on this bill. It is still at second reading.

Mr. Ken Epp: There are none? I was thinking that these were perhaps those where we have to have some decent debate and make sure that what we do, we do right, but then after that debate, we should go ahead and proceed.

I did not have a list of all of the bills that the member mentioned, so I did not know where they were in terms of the process here, but at any rate, we want to move expeditiously forward on these criminal justice matters and I am really rather pleased, I guess, that the Liberals once again are saying that they are in favour of law and order, and these measure to get tough of crime.

Government Orders

The only thing that bothers me is that in the last election, in order to try to gain some votes, they were also saying that, but in the 13 years when they were in a position of being able to do something about it, they did absolutely nothing. We are worried that perhaps they are just empty words to try to appeal to the electorate.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that we committed 400 additional police officers in the last campaign in 2006.

When I am talking to the mayors of Surrey and Vancouver, they are telling me that they have put more police officers than supported by the Conservative government across Canada, so that shows how little it is interested in providing an effective policing system and an effective justice system for Canadians.

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address Bill C-35, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (reverse onus in bail hearings for firearm-related offences).

I have long been a strong advocate for tough, smart and effective law and order measures in my riding of North Vancouver. In my previous role as mayor of the district of North Vancouver, I worked closely with local law enforcement officials to address crime and justice issues in our community and to ensure that North Vancouver is safe for residents and families.

Superintendent Gord Tomlinson and the North Vancouver RCMP detachment do excellent work in our communities with a comprehensive policing approach which includes working with concerned members of the community to ensure we are all doing our part.

The North Vancouver block watch program immediately comes to mind. Designed to build safer neighbourhoods by providing support, guidance, training and resource materials to develop and operate neighbourhood block watch programs, block watch has flourished in my riding by informing and engaging citizens about keeping our neighbourhood safe.

The North Vancouver RCMP also facilitates the local citizens on patrol program which utilizes local volunteers to monitor areas where the community is requesting more patrolling and where history and statistics demonstrate crime is more likely to occur.

Volunteers are paired up, given a combination cell phone-radio and they patrol in their own vehicles looking for any suspicious activity, which they phone in to the RCMP. The volunteers receive training on what to look for and how to react when they observe suspicious activity.

The decision to start this program in North Vancouver was prompted by the success of similar programs in Coquitlam, Mission and Vancouver, and it is part of the way the RCMP is expanding its level of service throughout British Columbia through the use of enthusiastic local volunteers.

As well, community policing offices located in neighbourhood shopping centres across North Vancouver are staffed by local volunteers and provide a friendly local face and convenient location for residents to come to for information on policing services and crime prevention programs.

While Bill C-35 makes appropriate changes to better deal with those already charged with firearms related offences, we cannot forget the value that preventive measures, such as block watch, citizens on patrol and community polices offices, have in preventing crimes from being committed in the first place.

While I have always been an advocate for being tough on crime, government can do more to prevent crime in the first place. We can be tough and smart on crime at the same time, while building safer communities with a view to future generations. Constituents in my riding understand this. It is therefore disappointing to see the government is more content playing politics with its law and order agenda.

Like my constituents, the Liberal Leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, understands this and is not soft on crime as the Conservative government is attempting to portray him with its latest republican style smear campaign.

A Liberal government would sit down to negotiate with the provinces to give municipalities more money to hire more officers and give the RCMP an extra \$200 million to hire 400 officers for rapid enforcement teams across Canada that would boost local police and communities in their fight against guns, gangs, organized crime and drug trafficking.

Unlike the Conservative government, we will walk the walk and not just make hollow promises when fishing for votes. A Liberal government would also give provinces more money to hire more crown attorneys to speed up trials and to establish organized crime secretariats in every province, similar to Ontario's very successful guns and gangs task force to fight organized crime.

In addition, we will actually fill the judicial vacancies that currently exist across the country. How can the Conservatives claim to be tough on crime when they sit on their hands as judicial vacancies grow and the courts get more and more backlogged by the day? That is not providing justice for Canadians. Justice delayed is justice denied.

There are examples at all court levels of charges being dropped due to unreasonable delays in proceeding to trial. It is not good enough.

While the government has failed to convince Canadians it is capable of doing more than just talking tough on crime, let us turn to Bill C-35.

Government Orders

●(1020)

Bill C-35 would amend the Criminal Code of Canada to provide that the accused will be required to demonstrate, when charged with certain serious offences involving firearms or other regulated weapons, that a pre-trial detention is not justified in their case. These offenders have shown they are a danger to the public simply by using a firearm in the first place. Why should the onus be on a prosecutor to oppose bail being given in light of the serious nature of the crime for which they have been charged? Surely our law-abiding citizens deserve to feel protected from perpetrators of serious crimes.

The bill also introduces two factors relating to such offences that the courts must take into account when deciding whether the accused should be released or detained until the trial. Bill C-35 would require the courts to specifically consider: first, the fact that a firearm was allegedly used in the commission of the offence; and second, the fact that the accused faces a minimum penalty of three years or more imprisonment if convicted.

I strongly support amending the Criminal Code to add this provision. Police officers in my riding support this change, and constituents who simply want safe communities for their families support this change.

In addition, the Liberal opposition supports this change and we have demonstrated that in the House on repeated occasions.

For the fourth time in the past six months, the Liberal opposition this week attempted to get this bill and several other justice bills we are prepared to support, Bill C-18, the DNA identification act, Bill C-22, the age of consent bill, and Bill C-23, criminal procedures, passed without delay through all stages of consideration by the House. Had all members of the government and the NDP agreed, these bills could have cleared the House yesterday and now be on their way to the Senate as we speak. They would have been closer to law and the Liberal proposal would have advanced more than half of the government's entire justice agenda.

That is what my constituents in North Vancouver want. They do not care about politics or the next election. They just want safer communities and results from the minority government. It is too bad the Conservatives are not more interested in getting results than getting headlines.

I support Bill C-35 because I believe that the offences for which it would require a reverse onus for bail provisions are serious and that the bill would help ensure a safer community in North Vancouver.

These offences include any one of the following eight serious offences committed with a firearm: attempted murder, robbery, discharging a firearm with intent, aggravated sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, kidnapping, hostage taking or extortion.

In addition, the reverse onus provisions will be required for any indictable offence involving firearms or other regulated weapons if committed while under a weapons prohibition order: firearm trafficking or possession for the purpose of trafficking or firearms smuggling.

I am more than comfortable with a change to the Criminal Code that would require individuals charged with these offences to make the case why they should be back on the streets while awaiting trial. I

know citizens in my riding, who are going above and beyond to do their part to create a safe community, such as Block Watch and Citizens on Patrol, would be more than relieved to know there will be less of a chance of encountering individuals charged with such offences.

The government, in its effort to unjustly brand the Liberals as soft on crime, repeatedly attempts to assert that the opposition is opposed to these reverse onus measures as they are not in line with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. While this party's commitment to the charter is unwavering, such an assertion is factually incorrect. It is true that the charter protects the presumption of innocence and the right not to be denied bail without just cause pending trial but within this basic presumption, however, bail can in fact be denied in order to ensure that the accused does not flee from justice, to protect the public if there is a substantial likelihood that the accused will reoffend and to maintain confidence in the administration of justice.

Although the prosecutor usually bears the onus of demonstrating why an accused should be denied bail, there are currently situations where it falls to the accused to demonstrate that detaining him or her is not justified. For example, the onus already shifts to the accused if they are charged with: an indictable offence committed while already released on another indictable offence; if they fail to appear in court or allegedly breach a release condition; for certain organized crime, terrorism or security of information offences; for drug trafficking, smuggling or drug producing offences; and, if they are not ordinarily a resident of Canada.

The Liberal opposition has made repeated efforts to have Bill C-35 fast-tracked through all stages of the House only to be blocked by the government. The Liberal Party's support for measures similar to those found in Bill C-35 go well beyond this debate today and even this 39th Parliament.

I was pleased, as were law enforcement and residents in North Vancouver, with our party's proposals during the last election in support of the reverse onus bail hearings for firearms related offences.

Our position on this issue has not changed. Canadians sent us to Ottawa to work together and that is what the Liberal opposition is attempting to do with our proposal to fast-track Bill C-35 and the three other bills.

The Modernization of Investigative Techniques Act, MITA, from the previous Parliament, will be reintroduced later today as a private member's bill by the Liberal justice critic and the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. I can only hope the government will not block this bill too. The government needs to prove that it is more interested in getting results than headlines.

Government Orders

●(1025)

I will continue to support Bill C-35 and I encourage the minority Conservative government to work with this Parliament, including the Liberal members, and pass these laws that will enhance Canada's Criminal Code and justice system. Families in my riding want these bills passed. Police officers favour these changes and I stand here today to demand that the government listen to Canadians and do the right thing.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMENTS BY MEMBER FOR PALLISER

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order that was raised yesterday.

During the late show debate on Wednesday, I used language that, upon reflection, I realize I should not have used and I withdraw my words without reservation.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for that.

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CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-35, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (reverse onus in bail hearings for firearm-related offences), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think there is consensus on the bill but we also need to look at the prevention aspect of it, which I think he mentioned in his speech.

One of the things that troubles me is that when we look to those who are being enticed into crime, if I can use that term, and the tools that are available for criminals to do that, we seem to be lacking in prevention. We know that an ounce of prevention really does go a long way.

I would like to have his take on what we have proposed as a party to ensure we do not spend all of our political capital as well as our financial capital simply on bills that seem to wipe out the problem just with legislation. We support the bill, do not get me wrong, but we need to go further. When we have crimes with guns and the growth of gangs, it says that we have failed in our prevention.

We have called for the present government and the previous government to spend more on what is going on in our communities and to ensure there are opportunities for youth, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

It is not only important to look at legislation, it is important to look at prevention as well. I would like to hear the member's comments on that.

●(1030)

Mr. Don Bell: Mr. Speaker, our party certainly agrees that crime prevention is equally as important as dealing with the aftermath of crime in the sentencing and in the laws.

My colleague spoke earlier about the efforts being taken in the municipality of Surrey, for example, on a very comprehensive crime

prevention program that was put in place following a visit by the RCMP and the Surrey municipality to the U.K. where a crime prevention program focusing on the causes of crime has resulted in significant reductions in certain criminal activities.

We need to have a comprehensive approach, which I think I mentioned in my comments about the RCMP in North Vancouver, which includes programs like Block Watch, Citizens on Patrol and community policing. It is a case of getting awareness out there, getting the community involved and then dealing with the other aspects, such as homelessness, drug addictions and the social programs that are involved in the communities.

We need to do both but we need to ensure we provide adequate deterrents as well for the safety of the community and hence, why we need to ensure there are appropriate laws that indicate that Canada and our communities take the transgression of breaking those laws seriously.

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure all members present that I am not trying to hog the floor. It is just that I use the opportunity when I get it. If any other member wants to get in on this debate, I will then remain seated.

I want to, however, challenge the member. He accuses our party of playing cheap political games with the issue of crime. That is ludicrous. We believe that we are representing the wishes of our constituents and, in fact, all Canadians, even in those ridings where we do not have members of Parliament currently, in trying to push forward these particular issues.

That is not playing politics. It is simply doing what we are here for. That is what a parliamentarian is supposed to do. I resent the fact that the member somehow tries to cheapen this.

I would also point out to the member that during the 13 years of Liberal rule, the Liberals had an opportunity to do something real about the crime issues in this country but they chose instead to waste a billion dollars registering duck hunters and farmers who used long rifles. This is absolutely a ridiculous use of taxpayer money. Think of all of the police who could have been put on the streets and the judges who could have been hired with that money.

I am not saying this as being anywhere near a cheap political point. I am serious about this and I wish they were. I wish we would not play games or call it that when we are here to debate these serious issues.

Mr. Don Bell: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comment made by the member opposite, but I would like to point out that during the last three years, for example, and I can speak to my record in the House, repeatedly I have supported law and order bills that got tougher on crime, in several cases voting with the opposition at the time from my own point of view, on things like Carley's law and others.

Government Orders

My concern has been that if we are going to have laws, not only do they have to appear to be tough, but they really have to be tough, and they also have to be smart. As the previous member mentioned, we have to attack both the prevention aspect and the punitive aspect, and we have to protect the community as well. We have to ensure that the perpetrators or the accused and the convicted are removed from society for an appropriate period of time to provide safety and to give them a chance to be rehabilitated so they can come back into society as productive citizens.

My concern with respect to what I have seen of the bills presented by the government is there has been a lot of show and not much go. I appreciate that coming from the other side of the House the member will have a different point of view, but it seems to me that rather than having a comprehensive approach, the government has a scattergun approach that does not really focus on the broader issues, which we need to deal with in regard to justice in the community.

• (1035)

Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to take a perhaps somewhat more radical approach and simply speak to the bill. When I go back to Surrey North and my constituents ask me what I said about Bill C-35, I am not going to say to them that I stood up and criticized the Liberals first, then the Conservatives, then the Liberals, and then the Conservatives again.

I want to tell them that I spoke to the content of the bill because this is about the safety of people who live in our communities. Whether we know them, whether they are our loved ones or our neighbours or strangers, it does not matter. Across this country this piece of legislation has the potential of keeping more people safe, and I do not think that belongs to any particular party.

Surely all of us want people in our communities not only to be safe, but to feel safe, and there is a difference between being safe and also feeling safe. I do take note of the comment from my colleague from North Vancouver that people have to know that a piece of legislation works, that it is actually going to work. He is correct.

I want to talk about Surrey North for a moment as it relates to the bill. When I knock on doors in Surrey North, people do not have a long list of things that are top of mind. I suppose if I spent an hour on each doorstep we would get to more issues, but we can be very sure that if I get to only three issues crime will be one of them, and very often it will be the top one.

Therefore, any step we can take so that people do not have to say that crime is their very first concern is an important one, because nobody wants to live in fear. Nobody wants to feel that they are raising their children in an atmosphere of threat.

In the lower mainland over the last 10 years, we have had probably close to 100 young men injured and killed with illegal handguns, a significant number of them in the last five years. There are families and extended families grieving because they have lost a family member due to the number of illegal handguns on our streets. They are angry that someone who has injured or killed their loved one has been before the courts before or is out on bail for this very offence.

We have also seen that sometimes young children live in the home of someone who has an illegal handgun but does not keep it

anywhere special. The last time this happened, we heard that the handgun was on a coffee table. The children pick up the gun. They do not know it is real; they have just watched a TV program. They pick it up and they fire it at their younger brother, sister or someone else. In the last case I mentioned, it was fired at a brother, and the brother died, so now we have a four year old who will live the rest of his life knowing that he killed his brother, of course not with intent, as he is four years old, but with an illegal handgun that should never have been there in the first place.

• (1040)

I have long since learned in my life that I do not know the only stories that are out there, so if I can tell those stories from one of 308 constituencies, there are many more like them.

I believe there are some very important parts to this piece of legislation and I think there are some challenges to following up with regard to this legislation. In the NDP's justice policy, we talk about prevention, policing and punishment. This is part of that.

We know that many firearms crimes are committed by people who are out on bail after having committed previous crimes with firearms. That is not at all an uncommon story. We can open the local paper, turn on the television set or talk to a neighbour and we will hear about somebody who has used a firearm and was out on bail from having used a firearm before.

Knowing that this is a tragedy for families and communities, huge police resources are required at this stage, in many cases, to actually take on this challenge in an incredibly vigorous and proactive way. I want to use the Toronto example for why this kind of legislation not only will make a difference but will actually save resources that perhaps can then be redirected, as my colleague has said, toward prevention.

In the Toronto example, in order to actually be able to find charges to have repeat firearms offenders who had been granted bail incarcerated, because many times these are repeat offenders and the police know who they are, the police were actually given huge resources from the province. They would follow each and every one of these repeat offenders practically 24 hours a day until they were caught, and they were bound to catch them with some prohibition or some breaking of their bail conditions. Then they could bring them back to jail, where they could be kept because they broke a condition of their bail. It takes enormous resources to do that.

By the way, they were very, very successful. They spent all that money to follow people and wait for them to break their bail conditions and then return them to jail, which means using not only police resources but the resources of the justice system, because obviously they have to go before a judge before they can be reincarcerated, and they might have to wait, et cetera.

What can change? It is likely that many of those judges, left to their own devices, would have kept those people because they would have known those people were likely to reoffend. Most people who commit a crime using a handgun do not do it once. They do it many times.

Government Orders

•(1045)

The legislation would ensure that when people were arrested for carrying an illegal handgun, for using a handgun during a crime, they would have to prove why they should be allowed to be back out. Nobody will say that they should. What would be the case? What would be the reason they would give for that? There is no conceivable, logical reason they could give that would make sense to allow them to then walk out the door on bail, free to commit another crime.

In the last federal election our platform called for support for reverse onus on bail for all gun related crimes. Therefore, we will support the bill.

Many people remember the tragic shootings almost two years ago in Toronto at Christmastime. Two out of three of us live on the other side of the mountains in British Columbia and not everybody always hears about what happens there. It is always interesting that people can always remember what happens in Toronto, and I was born and raised in Toronto, so it is nothing against Toronto. When this tragic crime happened in Toronto, a 100 young men were killed in British Columbia. That is why I so strongly believe that anybody using a handgun should not be granted bail.

I know thousands of people regularly watch the parliamentary channel. I am always interested to hear when I go home that people watch what we say. If people have just turned on their television sets, we are talking about establishing the reverse onus on handguns and bail, meaning the onus is on those accused to establish they are not a serious risk before they get bail.

Some people would say we should not use reverse onus. I think we have to use it very carefully. Reverse onus is used in other situations where the accused is already on bail for an indictable offence and is then subsequently charged with that offence. As well, for organized crime, terrorism, some kinds of drug trafficking, smuggling and other kinds of offences, reverse onus is applied. I do think it has to be monitored. We have to look very carefully at how it is being used so it is never abused. However, it certainly is not the first time it has been used and there are many precedents for this.

I will return to some earlier comments.

The leader of our party, the member for Toronto—Danforth, has talked for a long time about being smart on crime, which is why we have talked about the three streams being prevention, policing and punishment. With this legislation, which I support, other accompanying things need to happen and the Conservatives, the Liberals, ourselves and the Bloc must ensure they happen and it will take resources.

•(1050)

I do not want to be sitting somewhere in five year's time saying that the legislation is working well but we have just as many people, if not more, in the situation of being denied bail because they used the handgun. I want to see fewer people, not just good legislation, but a reduction in the number of people coming before the courts under those circumstances. That will only happen if we address the other things that are necessary to reduce the use of handguns or to reduce the involvement of youth, teenagers and adults in a life of

crime. When I say “youths” they are sometimes as young as 11 or 12.

This is the kind of prevention at which we need to look. I know it is hard for people because they do not see it for 10 years, but it starts with how do we support infants and their families, young children and their families, school-aged children and their families, so those parents can do the very best in raising their children. We want the community to provide them with the best options possible for having things to do, whether it is kicking a soccer ball, going to a community centre or whatever that might be. Those things take resources.

I have talked about this for most of my adult life. I originally trained as a pediatric nurse and I have always worked primarily with children. If we cannot see an instant response to helping an infant and the family, then people move on to the quick answers, to legislation.

It is not that this legislation is not needed, but it cannot stand on its own. We cannot expect it to reduce crime by itself. It will certainly keep in jail those people who should never be allowed out on bail, and it absolutely should, but I do not want to see more people before the courts.

I know this will be difficult because we will not see results for 10 years. For politicians who work in terms, sometimes that is difficult. It is also often difficult for the community because it wants the quick answer to solve the problem. The community wants to feel safe immediately and they deserve that.

As members of Parliament, we have a societal responsibility to ensure that parents and children get the support they need. Maybe if there were not so many children having to, not choosing to, come home on their own after school and having all this time by themselves, this might help. This happens because there is no child care in their communities, and there will not be any new child care for them. If there happens to be child care, they are be unable to afford it anyway.

We know that gangs target children at the ages of 10, 11 and 12 because these gangs believe that the law will not be hard on children. The older gang members plan and recruit those 10, 11 and 12 year olds to commit those crimes. Those young children should not be mentored by gang members. They should be mentored by soccer coaches, people at community centres or whatever the activity, such as Brownies, Guides, Boy Scouts, Cubs. They should be the mentors, not gang members. We should not be putting children in the position where they can be mentored by gang members either.

The whole issue of what we do to prevent children from becoming involved in crime will also tell the tale of whether this legislation will also help not only keep people safe and keep people in jail, but will also reduce the number of people committing crimes.

Statements by Members

•(1055)

If we are to pass the legislation, it should be done quickly. Perhaps an omnibus bill would have moved this crime legislation through more quickly. However, we also need new facilities and more staff and we need the judicial appointments filled because more people will be kept in jail. I expect resources will be provided to go along with that.

I support the legislation, but it has to go along with those things that will ensure we see fewer numbers of people, with firearms charges, before the courts because we have been able to reach out to them earlier.

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think most Canadians would agree with what the member described, and what I would call it, as a balanced approach. This means social investments in the early stages of family life such crime prevention, recreational and health programs to prevent the pessimism and depression that often leads young people into these crime situations.

We saw the budget from the government this week. Does my colleague think the government's agenda, as shown in its two budgets, reflects the balanced approach about which she has talked? We have seen an emphasis both in the legislation and other places on punishment, but I am not sure I am seeing the social investments or the crime prevention programs that would lead to that balanced approach.

Ms. Penny Priddy: Mr. Speaker, there was some noise down at this end. Could the member repeat the last part of her question?

Ms. Bonnie Brown: Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about a balanced approach, about prevention, et cetera. She even tied it to early social investments in families.

Does she see from the current government, as demonstrated by its budget this year and last, that balanced approach? Is she seeing sufficient social investment? Is she seeing sufficient crime prevention methods, or is she just seeing emphasis on conviction and punishment?

Ms. Penny Priddy: Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of my comments I said I would not criticize anybody—

Hon. Jay Hill: Just a little one.

Ms. Penny Priddy: No, I am not, Mr. Speaker. This does not come as a criticism at all. Governments choose to put their priorities in their budgets.

Over my probably 40 years of experience in working with children, I know what gives them the best chance of going on a good path. If the member is asking me if I see those initiatives in the budget, no I do not. I would list those initiatives as not just child care. Everybody talks about child care, and it is incredibly important, but it is important to begin before a child is even ready for child care, with support for pregnant moms.

I am not sure I saw a lot of support for pregnant moms in the budget in terms of teaching parenting before the baby is even born, or support early on for both mom and dad or whoever the primary caregiver will be. Many projects like the Hawaii healthy start program, or the programs in Toronto, British Columbia and across

the country do that. They work with families and very young children and teach parents how to play with their children. We parent as we have been parented. Many adults have not had an opportunity to be parented almost at all and—

•(1100)

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but it being 11 o'clock we will now proceed with statements by members. She will have about six minutes remaining in the time for questions and comments when debate is resumed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SLAVE TRADE ABOLITION

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year will mark the 200th anniversary of the enactment of an act that abolished the slave trade in the British Empire.

Canada was pleased to join the recent United Nations General Assembly resolution concerning the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, which declared March 25 as the international day of commemoration for this important anniversary.

Let there be no doubt that while it was legal at the time, Canada believes that the transatlantic slave trade was repugnant and is a stain on the fabric of history. Were it to occur today, it would constitute a crime against humanity.

The bicentenary also provides an opportunity to pay tribute to the moral conviction of those who campaigned for slavery's abolition and to raise awareness of our history.

It is also a reminder that we must remain vigilant to ensure the full participation of all members of society and to fight racism and discrimination in all their forms.

* * *

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, religious freedom is under attack in many countries of the world and all of us as parliamentarians should be concerned about that. Persecution of individuals for their religious beliefs is both immoral and unjust.

Countless Iraqi Christians have been driven out of their country and many of these refugees have been approved for sponsorship to Canada. Local community groups are ready and able to sponsor these true refugees, but sadly, many of these applications are stalled as the minority Conservative government is turning its back on these very refugees.

The minister refuses to meet with their Canadian sponsors or offer any assistance. I call upon the government to commit today to help the victims of religious persecution around the world.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

ANDRYVES LANDSCAPING COMPANY

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Paysagiste Andryves has carved out an enviable spot among specialized landscaping companies, thanks to the courage and determination of its owners, and has firmly set down roots in the area.

Over the years, André Fournier and Yves Charest, originally math teachers, have pursued their passion and, through their art, have shared with the residents of Les Moulins and Quebec their love of the environment while continuing to educate people to the beauties of nature.

Proud of its team of more than 20 employees, Paysagiste Andryves, which has won several awards in Quebec, is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

The members of the Bloc Québécois and I offer our sincere congratulations and wish them many more years of success.

* * *

[English]

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate that Ottawa is the home to the world's largest chamber music festival. However, Ottawa remains the only capital city in the western world without a concert hall that would serve as a multi-use facility for musicians to record and perform their music.

The opportunity for a concert hall was first raised during the last session of Parliament, but the government did not act to secure the funding. Today we can make that dream a reality.

The proposed project has been endorsed by the community, the City of Ottawa and the Government of Ontario. It is now dependent on the Government of Canada to provide matching grants for this project.

A new concert hall in the nation's capital would be a major benefit to the cultural life of the citizens of Ottawa and would be an economic impetus for the tourism industry.

I urge the government to provide the Chamber Music Society with the matching contribution which is essential for this important venture to provide the arts community with an economic platform and Canadians with a dynamic venue for music and performing arts.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week Canada's new government tabled a historic budget built on the needs of Canadians and the potential of this great country, a budget that is broad enough to touch every sector, yet focused enough to touch individuals.

Without even reading it, the opposition leader said no, but when one of his own said yes, he yelled, "Get out. It is my way or the highway".

On behalf of Cambridge, I say yes to \$300 million for a cervical cancer vaccine, to more money for child care and families, to a rebate to help the environment and our automotive industry, to hazard mat training for our firefighters, to MedicAlert bracelets for kids, to a 100% GST rebate for our municipalities, and to more gas tax funding to our cities.

Why would the Liberals vote against these things? Because their leader said not to? I say that is not fair.

* * *

● (1105)

[Translation]

DENISE BEAUCHAMP AND GRANT TOOLE

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 9, the Ottawa regional council of the Ontario French-Canadian association awarded the 2006 Grandmaître prize to Denise Beauchamp. Following her 35-year teaching career, Ms. Beauchamp dedicated herself to volunteer work. In addition to her involvement with young people and her parish, she also became the chair of the regional section of FAFO, the Ontario federation of francophone seniors and retirees, a job she has carried out brilliantly. Bravo, Denise, and thank you.

For his part, Grant Toole received the francophile of the year award from the French language Catholic school board of eastern and central Ontario. As program director for the Focus Vanier community organization since 2000, he is very involved in his community. He was also one of the five claimants in legal action that led to control over the management of French language schools in Ontario. As this is Francophonie Week, on behalf of the residents of Ottawa—Vanier, especially the residents of Vanier, I would like to thank Denise and Grant for their outstanding contributions.

* * *

[English]

CONSERVATIVES

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if people believe in Canadian sovereignty from coast to coast to coast and honour our sovereign; if people believe in the value of a dollar and the worth of investing in their community; if people work hard for an honest day's wage and share their earnings to assist those in need and to help individuals help themselves; if assisting a fellow human being is as rewarding as helping oneself; if people pray for humanity rather than prey on it; if people encourage our military and support our veterans when the fighting is done; if people desire clean air to blow, clean water to flow, and green forests to grow; if family is most important and is closely followed by true patriot love; if people believe in personal responsibility and aspire for truth and justice; if people believe in democracy, freedom and hope for a better tomorrow; they are Canadians and together we stand on guard for thee. And which is more, my friends, they are Conservatives.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

CANADA SUMMER JOBS

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Sunday, the Minister of Labour gave an interview to the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean *Progrès-Dimanche* in which he said he was disappointed that he had lost his discretionary power as a member of Parliament to award subsidies in the new Canada summer jobs program.

As the member for Jonquière—Alma, he was very open about criticizing that decision when in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, but here in Ottawa, the minister is taking a completely different approach by remaining silent on the subject. If he really is that disappointed in his government's decision, it is his duty to express that here in this House just as he did in his riding. Many community organizations are concerned about the choice to centralize decision-making in Montreal and Ottawa, where regional realities are less well understood.

I would therefore urge the Minister of Labour to stop contradicting himself and denounce the Conservative government's decision here in Ottawa.

* * *

[English]

ZIMBABWE

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Zimbabwe's opposition MPs face the constant threat of physical abuse, beatings or even death at the hands of the police and the gangs used by Robert Mugabe's regime to carry out its dirty work. To protect these MPs, many have been twinned with legislators from other countries.

Sometimes twinning works and sometimes it does not. Several years ago I was twinned with an opposition MP named David Mpala. He was beaten to death by thugs who were never prosecuted.

So I was paired again with a brave young opposition spokesman named Nelson Chamisa. Two weeks ago, he and dozens of others were attacked by police while conducting a peaceful demonstration. And then last Saturday, as Nelson was preparing to fly to Brussels to report on this latest round of abuse, he was beaten by eight thugs in the parking lot of Harare airport.

Today Nelson is hospitalized with a fractured skull, a detached retina and possible kidney damage. As usual, the assailants have vanished without a trace. It is time for the entire civilized world to hold Robert Mugabe personally accountable for his regime's reign of terror.

* * *

DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate a number of my constituents who were honoured this week. The Fredericton Chamber of Commerce has recognized four individuals in the annual Distinguished Citizen Awards.

They are: the late Ira Beattie, a founding partner with ADI Group and former head of the University of New Brunswick civil

engineering department; family physician and provincial health minister Dr. Russ King; and long time artists Molly and Bruno Bobak. In fact, a street on Fredericton's north side is being dedicated to the Bobaks.

The 16th annual Fredericton Sports Wall of Fame inductees are: former Canadian national team triathlete Elizabeth Seiffert; long time midget hockey coach Kevin Pottle; Minto hockey coach and administrator Bob Deap; and Frank "Mush" Morehouse who is 91 years young, who played senior hockey in Fredericton, Toronto and Quebec from 1931 to 1950.

University of Ottawa quarterback Josh Sacobie has been named Fredericton's athlete of the year.

Commendations to them all.

* * *

●(1110)

CORNWALL

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand in my place as the very proud member of Parliament for the riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. One of the communities in my riding is the city of Cornwall. I want to talk about the residents of this great community.

On March 31, 2006 one of our major industries closed and 1,000 of our best paying jobs were lost. Did the residents of Cornwall roll over and die? Definitely not. We decided to pick ourselves up by the bootstraps and move on, and that is just what we did.

This March we set out to claim the title of Hockeyville. I am proud to say that thanks to the leadership of people like Christine Lefebvre, Lorne Taillon and Gilles Latour of team Cornwall, we came second. That is right. Of all the cities and towns in Canada that wanted to be Hockeyville, Cornwall came within a whisker of claiming the title.

I am very proud of the people of Cornwall and their wonderful attitude. I want the whole country to be proud of them as well.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Hamilton Centre watched this week's budget announcement closely, hoping for something, anything, that would alleviate the growing challenges they face every day, but for Hamilton and other municipalities, there was only disappointment.

There was nothing for our public transit system. Improving the HSR is a priority for my hometown of Hamilton, but the government still will not provide long term funding to municipalities and it still will not develop a national transit plan.

There was nothing to help the one-quarter of Hamilton's children who live in poverty, this from a government that only cares about wealthy oil companies and big banks.

There was nothing to meet our Kyoto targets or for the environment, even though Hamilton suffers the equivalent of three weeks of unbreathable air every year.

There was nothing to help build public housing, nothing for post-secondary student debt and nothing to help new Canadians have their professional credentials recognized, another Conservative promise broken.

It is shameful that with a \$13 billion surplus, Hamiltonians woke up the day after the budget no better off than they were the day before.

* * *

PASSPORTS

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the delays in issuing and renewing passports in Canada has become a national embarrassment.

Across this country thousands of frustrated Canadians have agonized over the possibility that their travel plans would collapse for lack of a passport. A process that should take 20 days now takes up to 60 days or longer. People are waiting for hours in long lineups at passport offices.

Who is responsible for this mess? It is certainly not the overworked passport office employees who are doing their best under difficult conditions to serve the public. No, it is the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the government who had over a year's advance notice of the new requirements for passports who are responsible. They did nothing to prevent this nightmare. There were no staff increases, no process improvements, nothing.

Now the citizens of Canada are paying for the Conservative government's inaction, such as families whose carefully planned holidays have had to be cancelled, often with financial loss or penalty.

Canadians demand and deserve better service from their government. A minister and government who could not or would not plan ahead for a problem they knew was coming is not acceptable.

* * *

[Translation]

SALON DU LIVRE DE L'OUTAOUAIS

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, under the honorary presidency of Ms. Pauline Gill, the 28th Salon du livre de l'Outaouais was held March 1 to 4 at the Palais des Congrès in Gatineau.

The theme of this year's edition was the environment. With the slogan "Mon livre, mon uniVERT", the Outaouais book fair offered its visitors of all ages a number of activities and a variety of events to encourage literacy and promote current literature. Activities included quizzes, comic book quizzes, seminars, book launches, discussions and a series of events called "Tout le salon en parle", hosted by distinguished guest Richard Petit and his Fou du Salon.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to commend the tremendous success of the 28th Salon du livre de l'Outaouais. In spite of harsh winter conditions, the event welcomed over 27,600 visitors. Congratulations to the organizers who contributed once again to carrying on the work of the event's founder, the late Jacques Poirier.

Oral Questions

•(1115)

[English]

FISHERIES

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fishers in Cardigan and across the country have serious concerns regarding the federal government's proposed new fisheries act, Bill C-45.

The government wants to push this bill through the House of Commons even though it has failed to properly consult with fishermen, the very people who depend on the fishery for their livelihood. The fishery is a common resource property and as such, Canadians from coast to coast deserve to be heard on this new legislation.

The P.E.I. Fishermen's Association supports the Liberal motion to hoist Bill C-45 so that the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans can hold proper hearings across the country.

Fishermen want to be heard. I ask the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to support the Liberal motion so that Bill C-45 can receive proper hearing from the industry and the public itself. Why does the government want to shove this bill down the throats of fishermen without proper consultation?

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Canadian farmers should be contacting their members of Parliament to tell them to support budget 2007 because our Conservative government is getting the job done for agriculture and the environment.

Budget 2007 includes \$2 billion in incentives for renewable fuel production. The results will be a fresh energy supply and new jobs in our growing Canadian renewable fuel sector, including biofuels and cleaner air. This is a big boost for farmers, homegrown biofuels producers and our environment.

This measure will lead to over 20 new world-class biofuels facilities in Canada, create over 14,000 new jobs in rural communities, and provide a new market for over 200 million bushels of Canadian grains and oilseeds.

After 13 years of neglect and denying Canadian farmers, the current government is preparing for the agricultural opportunities of the future

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the defence minister has already had to admit that he misled the House on Afghan detainees and now it appears he has done it again.

Oral Questions

This week he claimed his department was not trying to block any inquiry into the treatment of detainees, but a March 13 letter from the Judge Advocate General says just the opposite. It confirms that national defence is actively trying to block the Military Police Complaints Commission.

The minister is obviously incapable of handling his duties or even knowing what they are. When will he resign?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have said a number of times in the House that all four investigations that are in transit right now will proceed.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister's incompetence is astounding. Yesterday, he affirmed that Canadian troops and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission were going to supervise detainees in prisons. Yet, the United Nations Secretary-General said, and I quote:

Access remains a problem for the commission.

The minister still does not know all the facts and continues to speak nonsense. When will he resign?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is very proud of the excellent work of our Minister of National Defence and I think most Canadians are very proud as well.

We have entered into an agreement that ensures that the independent human rights commission has the opportunity to investigate and report back to us on any reports or any questions on the treatment of detainees.

Of course, the original agreement with the Afghan government ensured that the International Committee of the Red Cross also had the same type of access. As a result, we are satisfied that the protection of detainees is ensured under the Geneva Convention.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Conservative government claimed it was funding the Afghan Human Rights Commission to monitor detainees. Again, that claim is completely false.

The only Canadian money that commission has ever received is \$1 million from the Canadian and Liberal government five years ago. The Conservative government has not given the commission a penny.

Will the defence minister do our troops and Canadians a favour and resign?

• (1120)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no news here. News reports and opposition questions have suggested that Canada had given no money to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission.

For example, an Ottawa *Citizen* article from March 19 reported: "Canada had earmarked just over \$2,000 for the commission, but its report indicates that money was not disbursed".

I felt obliged to reassure the House that this was simply not correct. The Canadian government had, as the member just pointed out, given the commission \$1 million. That is a fact and that is what we told the House.

* * *

MINISTER OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the public safety minister's job to ensure the integrity and independence of the RCMP.

Serious allegations have surfaced that when the minister was leader of the opposition his officials appeared to have designed an illegal buy-out to pave the way for the minister to run in a safe riding.

Because these allegations lead directly to the minister and suggest he may have known in advance of the scheme, will he do the prudent thing and step aside while the RCMP looks into this serious matter?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe the RCMP dealt with that matter many years ago. It is an old matter.

Perhaps while the opposition is concerned about these kinds of issues I could read this to the House:

"Ontario Grits paid candidate to step aside: \$25,000 deal set up by MP after McGuinty ousted contestant"

Ontario Liberals paid \$25,000 in compensation to nomination contestant David Merner after Premier Dalton McGuinty anointed Madeleine Meilleur as the provincial party's candidate in Ottawa-Vanier in 2003. According to Mr. Merner, the man who brokered the deal was a federal Liberal cabinet minister, the MP for the federal riding of Ottawa-Vanier.

Perhaps the hon. member would like to ask for his resignation today.

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know why the minister is sensitive about this issue, but this is a serious matter and the minister must acknowledge its seriousness.

The only way to ensure that the RCMP is able to investigate this new evidence that has come forward is for its boss to step aside. If he believes in accountability, he must also practise it.

Will the minister step aside and remove any possible conflict of interest?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I notice that the hon. member did not give any response to our suggestion that if an apple is an apple perhaps he should ask the Liberal member for Ottawa—Vanier to resign. Apparently, they are two different tests, two different standards. That is the way it has always been for the Liberal Party.

We do not work that way. This is an old news story. It was investigated and dealt with by the RCMP. Perhaps he could talk to the member for Ottawa—Vanier about what he did.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***AFGHANISTAN**

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the way Canadian soldiers treat detainees in Afghanistan is a problem. The Minister of National Defence tried in vain to hide the truth by referring to an alleged agreement with the Red Cross. The minister was out of luck when the Red Cross denied this agreement and he had to retract his comments. By all accounts, the minister's situation is not improving. In fact, things keep getting worse.

Does the minister not think that the only honourable solution is for him to step down?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister was clear. He clarified things. Access to detainees is the responsibility of the Afghan independent human rights commission. Nonetheless, I am concerned by the fact that the opposition seems only to be interested in the detainees. For example, the Bloc has asked questions about the detainees 17 times, but only asked once about the soldiers.

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is a highly important matter and that is why we ask so many questions. We have not received an answer from this government.

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons came to the rescue of the Minister of National Defence by saying that a million dollars has been given to the Afghan independent human rights commission to supervise the transfer of detainees. What the leader did not say is that this million dollars was given five years ago, in 2002.

Does the leader realize he has to find another explanation to help out his colleague because this version is not very compelling?

• (1125)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of our Minister of National Defence because he reached an agreement with the Afghan independent human rights commission ensuring access to detainees in order to see that their civil and human rights are protected. We are very proud of his success.

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the lack of an agreement allowing Canadian authorities to follow up on detainees transferred to the Afghan authorities is not without implications; it puts at stake not only Canada's international commitments but also the safety of Canadian military personnel.

Knowing that the Afghan human rights commission lacks resources, does the minister intend to enter into an agreement similar to the one the Netherlands signed with the Afghan authorities to follow up on the detainees?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said earlier, we have recently signed an agreement with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission which has undertaken to go into the Afghan prison system and monitor any detainees that we transfer to the Afghan authorities. If there is any abuse of those people, it is to report to us.

[Translation]

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the government that the signing of international treaties carries obligations which, in this case, the Canadian military then has to fulfill.

Does the Minister of National Defence realize that, in the absence of proper mechanisms, he is putting our military personnel in a very vulnerable situation, exposing them to charges of violating international treaties?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our men and women in Afghanistan support the values of Canadians. They support the values of human rights. They do not abuse anyone. I reject any aspersion on our troops.

We have made an agreement with the Independent Human Rights Commission in Afghanistan. It has undertaken to monitor the treatment of detainees that we transfer to the Afghan authorities. I spoke to representatives at the Kandahar level and at the national level and they said that they could do the job.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week the message was loud and clear: the Conservative government does not care about New Brunswick's working families. It simply does not care at all.

Once more, the government has decided to leave the Atlantic provinces out of the federal budget. Meanwhile, 400 people participated in an information session to find work in western Canada.

When will the government care about the people of New Brunswick? When will it understand that economic and social development are crucial to the future of our province?

Hon. Greg Thompson (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to use the words of the finance minister and ask the member for Acadie—Bathurst to read the budget.

In fact, the New Brunswick government alone is getting over \$203 million more than it received under the previous Liberal government. That is significant. In addition, New Brunswick is getting \$110 million more than it received in our budget last year. That is being pretty generous to New Brunswickers.

I do not know how the member can come up with less when the province is getting more. That is poor arithmetic.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the minister asks the premier of New Brunswick, he will have the answer.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Workers from all regions of Canada need employment insurance. This issue was completely ignored in the Conservative budget, despite surpluses of \$51 billion.

Once again, the Bloc Québécois has decided to sell its soul by supporting the Conservative budget. The Bloc is turning its back on workers; it is turning its back on the unemployed.

Will the minister explain to workers in need why it is large corporations that are receiving money again, when it is the workers who need help?

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member really should read the budget. It is a tremendous document. The Minister of Finance has done a great job of putting it together.

I point out to my friend that we already have in place a targeted initiative for older workers.

We have in place a new panel that will explore issues affecting older workers.

In the budget, we also announced \$500 million in labour market agreements so that provinces can provide training to workers of all kinds who need help. That is acting for workers of all kinds.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, who is getting what from this budget? A single mother earning \$23,000: nothing. The Prime Minister: at least \$620. A 57 year old widow living on a small pension: nothing. The Minister of Finance: \$930. A young couple with both individuals earning \$25,000: nothing. One million Canadians who believed the Prime Minister and invested in income trusts: \$25 billion less.

This is the Conservatives' idea of fairness?

[English]

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague asked this question because the fact of the matter is that all Canadians benefit from this budget.

All Canadians benefit because we are putting Canada back on a sound fiscal basis. We are going to have sound fiscal management for the first time in a long time.

We are going to give Canada a tax advantage that benefits all Canadians.

We are going to give Canada an infrastructure advantage with \$33 billion to help Canadians on infrastructure.

We are going to act on the environment. We are going to move forward, which the Liberals never did.

We are going to help with education.

All Canadians benefit from this budget and the member knows that.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us consider whether Canadians can believe the government: income trusts, broken promise; child care spaces, broken promise; foreign credentials approved, broken promise; controlling the size of government, broken promise; capital gains tax, broken promise; health wait time guarantee, broken promise; Saskatchewan, broken promise; and Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, broken promise.

Why should Canadians believe anything the government says?

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the member opposite completely distorts and mischaracterizes many measures that we have put forward.

He knows that we are moving ahead and that we have delivered fiscal balance while fully respecting the Atlantic accords that were negotiated. We are fully respecting our promises to the provinces.

The member knows that we are reducing taxes and that we are doing the things we said we would do. We will continue to do that with the support of Canadians across this country.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 2005 Atlantic accords were intended to make Nova Scotia and Newfoundland the primary beneficiaries of their offshore resources. They were eight year agreements, renewable for another eight years. The government ripped up these accords with the stroke of a pen in Monday's budget.

Why should any Canadian, why should any Nova Scotian or Newfoundlander, trust the Prime Minister when he can so easily rip up written agreements and break his own promises?

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Quite the contrary, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the budget explicitly affirms the Atlantic accords. The budget explicitly says that the Atlantic accords will be fully honoured by this government.

At the same time, we are moving to put the equalization program back on a sound, equal and fair standard for everyone. That is something the Liberals were completely unable to do and Canadians know that.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2004 the Prime Minister said that the prime minister has "a moral obligation to keep these promises: no caps, no clawbacks, no limitations, no conditions, no big exceptions in the fine print".

The Prime Minister will say anything and he will do anything before an election. He will break any promise after that election.

The Atlantic accords were 16 year agreements. Will the government commit to honouring the full 16 year duration of these accords?

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member opposite ought to read the budget because this is what the budget actually says:

To respect the Offshore Accords, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador may continue to operate under the previous Equalization system...This fulfills and builds upon the government's commitment to respect the Offshore Accords and ensures that these provinces will continue to receive the full benefit that they are entitled to under [the accords].

Oral Questions

That is what the budget actually says.

* * *

• (1135)

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, an internal report from the army points to some serious flaws in the management of transport contracts, including the shipping of munitions and explosives by civilian companies, and the army is not even sure that these companies have the required permits to do so. The Minister of National Defence is obviously out of his depth and has lost control of the management of his department.

What does he intend to do to ensure that munitions and explosives are shipped safely?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the member is referring to something that happened in the year 2004-05 and I think he will find a previous defence minister sitting on the other side.

However, we have corrected that issue. All the corrective action has been taken. Ammunition is moved safely throughout Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister should update his information. The report points out that the army paid bills without checking to ensure that the shipments had made it to their destinations. It adds that if the army had managed funds more effectively, savings of close to \$1 million could have been made.

How can the minister condone the fact that the army has wasted over \$1 million, considering that his government does not think twice about cutting millions of dollars in social programs, for purely ideological reasons?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help it if the member opposite refuses to take the answer.

The answer is that we had it investigated and all the corrective action has been taken. Any ammunition moving in the country is moved safely.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, whereas American farmers have record incomes year after year, our farmers are in the midst of the worst farm income crisis in history. Our farmers also have the right to work in an environment that allows them to turn a profit.

Quebec farmers feel that they have been left behind because, in spite of its promises, the government has only paid them 6.8% of the new money allocated to agriculture in its first budget.

This time, will the minister promise to pay a fair share to Quebec farmers, or about 20%?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Secretary of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quebec farmers receive their fair share and they know it. Furthermore, our government looks out for farmers and they know it.

Take supply management for example. This is what Laurent Pellerin wrote about specific measures we introduced. He remarked, "This announcement and the accompanying commitment represents one of the most tangible displays of political support for supply management by a government in 15 years".

While the Bloc talks, we take action.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether or not the secretary of state noticed, but an election is presently underway in Quebec. The three leaders of the main parties are saying the same thing as us, that there is a shortfall in funding for agriculture in Quebec. Not only do Quebec farmers not receive their fair share, but the Minister of Agriculture always closes the door on their request to establish an income support program that is stable and complements those of Quebec.

Instead of undertaking consultations to buy time, will the minister finally establish a support program that truly meets the needs of Quebec farmers?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Secretary of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will continue. You will note that we have solved a lot of issues in a short period of time.

With regard to supply management I would like to quote Mr. Pellerin again:

By moving from words to actions, the government has been able to dispel lingering doubts about its real intentions. This announcement is an acknowledgement of the place of supply management in Canadian agricultural policy.

We will now be making an additional \$1 billion investment with an income stabilization savings account—as requested—, bringing our support to \$4.5 billion since we formed the government. I repeat: while the Bloc talks, we take action.

* * *

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year, after he missed the boat on additional funding for economic development in Quebec, the minister promised that he would get something this year. As to what that would be, once again, the government did not add a single penny to the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec's budget.

Can the minister explain why he did not get anything this year? Did he forget to mention it to someone?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member should read the budget.

On page 15, it says that there will be \$30 million in new funding for festivals, which will relieve some of the pressure on my department.

Oral Questions

On page 200, it says that the National Optics Institute will receive \$15 million over two years, which gives my department even more room to manoeuvre to the tune of \$15 million.

Moreover, I would like to point out that three days ago, on March 20, the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie said, “This is a budget that will please the—”

• (1140)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in case the minister failed to notice, I would like to remind him that Quebec's manufacturing sector is in crisis. Businesses in the textiles, furniture and other sectors need more help, not less help. Last month alone, Quebec lost 33,000 manufacturing jobs.

Can the regions of Quebec tolerate a minister who comes up short at budget time year after year instead of coming up with more money for workers in Quebec?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I would suggest that the member read the budget.

With respect to the manufacturing sector, our government will accelerate capital cost allowances over two years, which will generate investment in various businesses in Quebec. This will benefit the regions of Quebec.

We have also implemented six new tools to help those Quebec regions with shrinking populations and “vulnerable” regions. We are investing a lot of money and we have created new tools that meet entrepreneurs' needs.

If my colleague paid more attention when I make announcements, he would see that people are happy with these new tools.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after reading all 477 pages of the budget, I have concluded that its lack of mention of regional economic development means a continuance of the disregard by the government for rural Canada. The Prime Minister has been quoted often on his disdain for the work of the four rural development agencies.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Does its absence in the budget mean that this is the beginning of the end for regional development in Canada?

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, quite the contrary. First of all, the budget confirms that gas tax money will continue to be distributed to the municipalities of the country, including rural and regional municipalities. That is \$2 billion a year.

In addition, the budget put \$16 billion into infrastructure. Again, that will help all municipalities.

The budget also increases the education allotment by 40%.

These and many other measures that I do not have time to get to benefit the regions the member is talking about.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I asked a very respectful question. It would have been nice to actually get a direct answer.

A few weeks ago in the House, the Secretary of State for Agriculture advised the hon. member for Malpeque that there was plenty of money for drought-stricken farmers.

On Monday, there was no mention of this in the budget, not for southwestern Saskatchewan, not for Peace River, not for Rainy River and not for Thunder Bay. Why not?

When will the Minister of Agriculture deliver on the specific funding promised by his secretary?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has made a commitment to farmers and a commitment in many different ways. It has just made a commitment of \$400 million through a farm program; 600 million more dollars on top of the programming that we have had in the past in terms of setting a new program for farmers; and we are working toward drought assistance for those farmers who need it.

Unfortunately, in Saskatchewan the provincial government refuses to even acknowledge that there is a problem, which makes it more difficult to work toward getting the aid that farmers need out there.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, at the aboriginal affairs committee, the Liberal members accused the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development of moving too quickly in bringing human rights to some of the most vulnerable Canadians, our first nations citizens.

Section 67 of the Canadian Human Rights Act prevents first nations from access and recourse that is available to all other Canadians through the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs please inform the House of the measures our government is taking to bring about the repeal of section 67 and bring human rights to our first nations Canadians.

•(1145)

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, section 67 was intended to be a temporary measure when it was introduced 30 years ago. Thirty years is far too long to live without human rights. I am proud that the Minister of Indian Affairs is moving swiftly to rectify the situation through Bill C-44, which would ensure that first nations citizens have equal access to human rights protections.

However, apparently the Liberals feel that 30 years without this protection has not been long enough.

I hope that when the time comes the members opposite support the rights of first nations people and vote in favour of Bill C-44.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Democratic Reform is misleading this House when he says that his so-called study on electoral reform is set up to have broad-based input from all Canadians heard.

In fact, the Canadian Press learned that the recruitment process has been compromised to an unauthorized sub-subcontractor. The contractor is accepting unsolicited applications after putting out a last minute word-of-mouth call this week.

I ask the Minister for Democratic Reform to come clean and tell Canadians how his process misses the mark, is unfair, undemocratic and does not engage citizens at the grassroots.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while this public consultations process is completely independent and run by an independent contractor, what occurred here is clearly an unacceptable situation.

I have been told by my officials that the subcontractor has been terminated, the situation has been corrected and the polling firm that is the main contractor has assured us that it will not affect the results of the report that it will be presenting to the government this summer.

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is using delay and stall tactics to put the brakes on any kind of voting reform in this country.

The system is broken and the minister does not want to hear from Canadians who have better ideas. In fact, he went so far as to appoint a firm that not only despises reform but advocates against changing our voting system. This is hardly fair or balanced. This is disgusting political trickery and manipulation of the highest order.

If this is to be a fair process, why hide it from Canadians? Will the minister now table the contracts in this House?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this was a very independent process. I suppose the NDP would only like to see a process where the contractor is one who shares its particular vision of an outcome to be predetermined.

Oral Questions

We do not want an outcome predetermined. We want to genuinely hear from Canadians, not those who have a lobby group that has made its views already clearly known, but from ordinary Canadians on the things that matter to them: House of Commons, Senate reform, the way our political parties work and, of course, the very important subject of civic engagement. We want to see more Canadians involved in every aspect of civic life.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the curtain has been drawn on our artists and creators. There is nothing in this budget that provides stable and predictable funding for artists. The Canada Council plays a major role in the cultural sector. It should not have make do with crumbs.

Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women commit to giving the Canada Council the necessary funding to help the artists who so desperately need it?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has her facts wrong once again.

In our first budget as Canada's new government, we dedicated \$50 million of new money for the Canada Council.

Since then, we have also eliminated the capital gains tax on publicly traded shares and that yielded \$20 million worth of donations going to the arts.

In the budget just released this week, the capital gains tax exemption was extended to private foundations. We expect to see more benefit from that to support our arts, which are so important.

[Translation]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is all well and good to say that others will help the Canada Council and our artists. The former Liberal government was committed to doubling the budget of the Canada Council for the Arts in order to help the cultural sector and to stabilize funding. This Conservative budget ignores our museums, our artists, our television industry and our film industry.

How can the minister explain the meagre results for those she says she defends?

•(1150)

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are results, as I just mentioned: \$20 million in new donations to support our arts communities, which is \$20 million on top of what we are doing. That is good news.

Oral Questions

Here are some other results. Hilary Pearson, President of Philanthropic Foundations Canada said, "Private foundations make unique and invaluable contributions to Canadian society, helping to advance important public priorities".

This tax change will spur donations and enable private foundations to do even more for Canadian communities. That is getting results. That is getting the job done. We are getting it done.

* * *

NORTHERN STRATEGY

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government built prosperity in the north with a new northern economic development fund. The Liberal government showed the north was special with a new northern strategy. The Liberal government signed new land claims in the north.

The only promise the Prime Minister made for the north was three icebreakers in a northern port and now they have vanished in the budget.

Would the Prime Minister tell us when his old government will finally keep its promises to the north?

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could indicate some of the comments coming out of Yukon, specifically from Premier Dennis Fentie, "I will speak specifically for Yukon. This budget gets us back to a principle based fiscal arrangement with the federal government, something for which we have been striving for some time now. That will be beneficial to us now and in the long term. Overall, I am very pleased with the steps that have been taken for us in Yukon".

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he did not address the broken promise at all. It was not even in his department.

On two days notice to the military, the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister made an emergency visit to the Arctic to avoid a major world aids conference.

Now the military reports that they disrupted a northern sovereignty exercise. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence should know when a northern sovereignty exercise is going on in the north.

The government caused more disruption by raising the hopes of people in small Arctic villages that they would have a great economic boost of an Arctic port.

Now that the government has broken that promise, what will it do for the economic development of these small northern communities?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the Prime Minister's commitment to the north, as is my commitment to the north.

I can assure the member and all members of the House that we will meet all our commitments to the north.

[Translation]

EXPORAIL RAILWAY MUSEUM

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on February 27, the House concurred in by a majority vote the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, calling for national museum status for the Exporail railway museum. This would ensure recurrent funding for the museum which, incidentally, is a major renowned institution in my riding.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women tell us what steps her government will be taking to implement the recommendations contained in this report?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to museums. When we took over from the Liberals, we had museums with leaky roofs, crumbling infrastructure and, according to the Auditor General, we are actually losing archival material faster than we were collecting it.

Our first priority are the national museums and we have delivered \$100 million to our national cultural museums.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by trying to dismiss the findings of the report with well-worn excuses, the government is showing once again, after the museums assistance program, how little it cares about museum institutions.

Could the minister just tell us if her government is going to move forward on the report, instead of feeding us their usual excuses?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member should read the budget that was introduced this week because we will be committing \$5 million annually to help small and medium sized museums to hire students and youth to work in those communities. We will be engaging those people to get them involved in preserving our culture in the future.

We also have \$30 million set aside to help Canadians in their communities for the expression and celebration of their local culture.

* * *

FORESTRY

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister's budget speech claimed that Canada starts at the Rockies, but four million B.C. residents and all Canadians know he is wrong. This budget did not mention the pine beetle a single time in 477 pages. The Prime Minister and the finance minister have both falsely claimed that they have put \$1 billion into the problem but they only budgeted \$400 million last year.

There is absolutely no new money for this serious problem, only re-announcements.

Oral Questions

When will the government do something for Canadians west of the Rockies?

• (1155)

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that B.C. appreciates the Liberals' new-found concern about the pine beetle problem because when people in British Columbia begged the former Liberal government to help them to contain this scourge of our parks, the former Liberal government devoted not one penny to it.

We have devoted \$1 billion to the pine beetle problem in the hope that this will contain the problem. Whether we can stop it now after the Liberals let it go on for so long, I do not know, but we are certainly going to work very hard on it.

* * *

[Translation]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the latest request to Parliament to amend the new fisheries act comes from the Liberal Government of New Brunswick.

[English]

What is more, opposition members keep calling on us to deal with serious fisheries problems, like invasive species, and then stall progress at every turn, at odds it seems with their own provinces.

Would the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans inform the House how he is planning to make progress in the new fisheries act regardless of partisan politics?

[Translation]

Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

[English]

Perhaps his own provincial minister in New Brunswick gave us a way to do it. He is urging members of Parliament's small parties to send the proposed new fisheries act to second reading. This has been re-echoed by the fisheries ministers from British Columbia, Yukon, Nunavut, Ontario, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. They are basically saying the same thing as the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

In my opinion, I say that we should get on with it, let it go to second reading and let the debate take place. It is time to put politics—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Surrey North.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the budget does nothing to lower prescription drug costs for ordinary Canadians. In 2005, over \$20 billion was spent on prescription drugs and yet 3.5 million Canadians have no drug coverage whatsoever. We spend more on drugs than we do on doctors. Expenditures are rising eight to ten times faster than the rate of inflation. This is shameful and it is shameful that the health minister did not do anything about it.

Will the Conservatives commit to lowering drug costs or will they leave Canadians to swallow the bills with the pills?

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member will know, this government has put a great deal of effort into helping our health care system provide better benefits to Canadians and particularly on wait time guarantees and the projects that will move that forward.

I am sure the provinces will have other programs. I know some of the provinces are working on giving assistance for the cost of drugs. The federal government will give over \$40 billion a year to the provinces and the money will increase by 6% every year. I hope the member will continue pushing for some of the programs she is talking about.

Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, skyrocketing drug costs hurt families, businesses and governments. Regular Canadians spend almost \$4 billion a year out of their own pockets on prescription drugs, businesses spend about \$7 billion and governments spend \$9 billion. When drug costs go up, everybody feels the pinch. A whopping 70% to 80% of businesses' overall health costs are on medication.

When will the government introduce a comprehensive plan to reduce drug costs and save Canadians money?

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, considerable investments have been made in the health care system. Not only do we have the wait times guarantee, but there are \$300 million for a vaccination for cervical cancer. The health minister is working with the provinces to address issues around pharmaceuticals.

Thank goodness this government is taking action because the previous government promised a national pharmaceutical strategy and delivered nothing. This government is delivering and Canadians appreciate it.

* * *

• (1200)

EQUALIZATION FORMULA

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Surrey and Delta property values are rising on average by more than 21%. Now the Conservative government is including B.C.'s skyrocketing property values as part of its equalization. This is a cash grab. Who will end up paying in the end? The hard-working British Columbia families, who have been betrayed by the budget, will.

When will the Prime Minister stop electioneering with tax dollars and deliver a real budget that does not stop at the Rocky Mountains?

Routine Proceedings

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House is well aware that the new equalization formula put into place by the government to provide fairness, to provide certainty, to provide long-term funding to the provinces includes measures that were recommended by an independent panel set up by the Liberal government. The new formula is committed to fairness.

The member will know that compensation of many millions of dollars was given to B.C. to help it move to the new formula. I am sure the member appreciates that.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, budget 2007 was full of good news, especially for Canadians who care about the environment and fighting climate change.

Earlier this week in Ottawa, the Minister of the Environment was joined by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Transport to talk about some of the great action Canada's new government is taking on climate change.

Could the Minister of the Environment tell the House about some of those great programs that will help clean our air and fight climate change across our great country?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Minister of the Environment was pleased to share with Canadians the government's eco-auto plans. Canada's new government will reward Canadians, who choose green vehicles, with a rebate program of up to \$2,000 for the purchase or lease of new fuel efficient vehicles.

We are going to place a green levy on the gas guzzling vehicles and put \$36 million over the next two years on vehicle scrappage programs to get the old gas guzzlers off the road. The David Suzuki Foundation said, "it's a step in the right direction".

We are getting it done.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the future of our country lies in a well educated citizenry, yet there was nothing in the budget to help students access post-secondary education. They will continue to face mounting debts as they did during the Liberal years.

Today student debt stands at \$20 billion in Canada. Why should a post-secondary education only go to those who are well off?

When will the minister strive to close the prosperity gap and honestly help working families with post-secondary education? Scholarships just do not cut it.

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it takes an extraordinarily negative point of view to see a 40% increase in post-secondary education transfers as bad news.

Over the next number of years, transfers to the provinces will increase by \$39 billion. The previous government cut transfers to students, to seniors, to the disabled by \$25 billion. We will never do that.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on four separate occasions in the House and at committee, the Minister of the Environment ruled out Canada's participation in international carbon markets.

Then the minister, on one of his international trips in search of his missing made in Canada plan, announced in Germany that he was considering reversing his position. Then yesterday the Prime Minister completely ruled out Canada's participation, only to be contradicted a half hour later by the Minister of the Environment in committee when he stated that Canada would participate.

Is the minister misleading the international community or is he misleading Canadians?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question is from the member who filibustered yesterday and shut down the environment committee.

The minister has been very clear all along that we will consider all options, but we will not send billions of dollars of taxpayer money out of Canada to buy hot air emission credits, as that member supports. We think it is better to spend those dollars in Canada to build new technologies, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to clean up the environmental mess left by the Liberals.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1205)

[English]

MODERNIZATION OF INVESTIGATIVE TECHNIQUES ACT

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-416, An Act regulating telecommunications facilities to facilitate the lawful interception of information transmitted by means of those facilities and respecting the provision of telecommunications subscriber information.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is quite an honour for me to table this bill, an act regulating telecommunications facilities to facilitate the lawful interception of information transmitted by means of those facilities and respecting the provision of telecommunications subscriber information.

The bill, called modernization of investigative techniques act, or MITA, is intended to ensure that telecommunication service providers build and maintain an interception capability on their networks that allows for the lawful interception of communications by our law enforcement agencies, like the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, but also our national police force, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, our provincial and municipal police.

Similar legislation is already in place in many countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom—

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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR COMMEMORATION

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this coming Sunday is a significant date in history. I therefore ask you to seek unanimous consent in the House for the following motion. I move:

That the House recognize the importance of March 25, 2007, as the International Day for the Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Act to Abolish the African Slave Trade in the British Empire.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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PETITIONS

JUSTICE

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have here a large petition of some 18,000 signatures largely collected by the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition.

The petitioners draw attention to the fact that section 241 of the Criminal Code of Canada states that everyone who counsels a person to commit a suicide or abets a person to commit a suicide, whether suicide ensues or not, is guilty of an indictable offence. The petitioners remind Parliament that the Supreme Court upheld section 241 in the Rodriguez decision, finding no charter right to suicide.

They call upon Parliament to retain section 241 of the Criminal Code, without changes, in order that Parliament not sanction or allow the counselling, aiding or abetting a suicide whether by personal action or by the Internet.

* * *

• (1210)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Speaker's Ruling

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-265—EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: On February 7, prior to the second reading debate on Bill C-265, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (qualification for and entitlement to benefits) standing in the name of the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, a point of order was raised by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform to the effect that this bill would result in significant new expenditures by lowering the threshold for eligibility for some claimants and changing the formula for the calculation of benefits. The parliamentary secretary supported this interpretation by referring to three rulings where the Chair concluded that similar bills, which extended employment insurance benefits, required a royal recommendation.

[Translation]

Interventions on this matter were also made by the hon. members for Mississauga South and for Acadie—Bathurst. The Chair wishes to thank all hon. members for their comments on this issue.

In replying to the parliamentary secretary's point of order, the member for Acadie—Bathurst expressed the opinion that a royal recommendation was not required since any new expenditure would be covered by contributions from workers and employers and not by the government.

[English]

I have examined the bill carefully and find that the changes to the employment insurance program envisioned by this bill include lowering the threshold for becoming a major attachment claimant to 360 hours, setting benefits payable to 55% of the average weekly insurable earnings during the highest paid 12 weeks of the 12 month period preceding the interruption of earnings, and removing the distinctions made to the qualifying period on the basis of the regional unemployment rate.

[Translation]

It is abundantly clear to the Chair that such changes to the employment insurance program, notwithstanding the fact that workers and employers contribute to it, would have the effect of authorizing increased expenditures from the consolidated revenue fund in a manner and for purposes not currently authorized.

Therefore, it appears to the Chair that those provisions of the bill which relate to increasing employment insurance benefits and easing the qualifications required to obtain them would require a royal recommendation.

[English]

In its present form I will decline to put the question on third reading of this bill unless a royal recommendation is received. Today, however, the debate is on the motion for second reading and this motion shall be put to a vote at the close of the second reading debate.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***CRIMINAL CODE**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-35, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (reverse onus in bail hearings for firearm-related offences), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Before question period the hon. member for Surrey North had the floor for questions and comments consequent on her speech. I therefore call upon the member for Yukon for questions or comments.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to comment on the presumption of innocence in relation to this bill.

Ms. Penny Priddy: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that I understand the question the member has asked. Perhaps he could rephrase it for me.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, a basic tenet of our legal system is that a person is presumed innocent until convicted by a court. Therefore, if the onus is put on prisoners, which I definitely agree with for other reasons, to prove their innocence and to prove that they should be allowed bail, could the member comment on that in relation to the philosophy of our judicial system where one is innocent until convicted?

Ms. Penny Priddy: Mr. Speaker, I understand it is a tenet of our legal system but we have as a society and as a government decided in a number of other circumstances where people's lives are at risk that reverse onus can play a role. That has been upheld.

That is why I said in my earlier comments that this needs to be tracked very carefully and the results of it reviewed. Any time we move into a reverse onus situation, we have to be very careful that it is not abused. There are at least four or five other examples of where reverse onus is used in order to protect, not from some unlikely threat, but to protect from a very likely threat that violence will happen again. In these circumstances both Parliament and the courts have upheld that.

•(1215)

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-35, which is before us here today. First of all, you will not be surprised to learn that the Bloc Québécois is against the principle of this bill, in part because we are opposed to upsetting the balance between the principles of security and the presumption of innocence. We believe that a person accused of a crime must be presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. In accordance with this presumption of innocence, it is important that the onus be on the Crown to demonstrate that the individual should not be released before his or her trial.

The Crown is in a better position to bear the burden of proof, given its expertise and resources, while the accused is left to his own devices, sometimes without even a lawyer to represent him. As a result, any encroachment on the presumption of innocence must be done with great caution, which is unfortunately not the case with this bill. The Bloc Québécois acknowledges that certain exceptions

already exist, but refuses to contribute to any violation of the key principle of presumption of innocence.

I would like to begin my presentation by putting things into context. The bill was tabled in the House of Commons on November 23, 2006 and proposes amendments to the Criminal Code to provide that the accused will be required to demonstrate, when charged with certain serious offences involving firearms or other regulated weapons, that pre-trial detention is not justified. In lay terms, we could say that the bill ensures that, for certain crimes, accused individuals awaiting trial must remain in prison, unless they can prove that they do not belong there.

I would like to give an overview of the bill. At present, the general rule states that it is up to the crown prosecutor to demonstrate that the accused should not be released on bail because he or she poses a danger to the public. The Criminal Code provides for some exceptions, however, and in such cases the accused must prove that pre-trial detention is unjustified. These exceptions are: breach of release conditions, involvement in organized crime, terrorism, drug trafficking, smuggling or production, murder, treason or war crimes.

With Bill C-35, the Conservative government is trying to broaden this range of exceptions. If passed, the bill will require the accused to prove to the judge that he or she may be released without causing concern for society for in connection with any and all of the following offences: attempted murder, discharging a firearm with intent to wound, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault, kidnapping, hostage taking, extortion, firearms trafficking or possession for the purpose of trafficking, any offence involving a firearm if committed while the accused is bound by a weapons prohibition order.

This bill has been widely criticized, not only by the Bloc Québécois but also by the legal community. It is clearly in response to the shootings in Toronto, the city in which the Prime Minister chose to announce the introduction of this bill. He was accompanied at the time by Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, a Liberal, and by Toronto Mayor David Miller, an NDPer. Support for this government bill from these two public figures prompted the Prime Minister to say that, between the three of them, they covered a large portion of the political spectrum, which meant there was some unanimity.

But when the Ontario premier and the mayor of Toronto suggested banning handguns, the Prime Minister was quick to reject the idea. "Simply banning guns we don't think would be effective," commented the Prime Minister, "What we do need to do is stop the smuggling of illegal weapons".

This is how the government has come to jeopardize a right that is critical to democracy, namely the presumption of innocence. But at the same time, it will not give a chance to the firearms program, whose costs—

•(1220)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Order, please. The hon. Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip wishes to rise on a point of order.

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[English]

Hon. Jay Hill (Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my apologies to the hon. member, but I rise on a point of order. There have been discussions between all the parties, and I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That when no member rises on Bill C-35 today, all questions necessary to dispose of the bill be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, March 27, 2007, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Does the hon. minister have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, I was talking about the hypocrisy of this Conservative government, which is claiming to table this bill in the name of preventing crime and specifically crimes committed with firearms. In the meantime, it wants to dismantle the firearms registry and it refuses to have stricter gun control.

To me it would be more logical to have an effective firearms registry and legislation prohibiting the possession of certain firearms—as the police are asking for. In fact, it would be much more effective to prevent the crimes than to reverse the onus of proof once the crimes are committed.

There is another aberration by this government which clearly shows that it is not serious about prevention. Most members in this House are probably faced with this situation in their ridings: currently, programs from the crime prevention research centre are on hold. Everywhere, community organizations working to promote crime prevention are waiting for the minister's signature to launch their projects. In my riding, Tandem, which is an organization that fights crime—by promoting prevention—is waiting for the minister's signature. Other organizations, such as Chantier d'Afrique, are also waiting.

If the government were serious, it would invest money and approve these projects, so that we can move forward in the area of prevention. It would also maintain the firearms program.

In this regard, I would like to quote some relevant figures that the Conservatives would rather not mention. These figures show that the gun registry works. Currently, 7.1 million firearms are registered. All the information gathered is far from being negligible.

Moreover, 90% of these guns are hunting rifles. Every day, the register is consulted an average of 6,500 times. Since December 1st 1998, a total of 1,154,722 guns have been exported, destroyed, neutralized or withdrawn from the Canadian information system, thus reducing by that much the risk of guns being used.

Experts are very skeptical about the effectiveness of the government's proposed measures to fight gun violence.

First, the bail system has not been the subject of as many studies as other aspects of the criminal justice system have. There may not be an answer for even the most simple questions, such as: how many individuals charged with committing a crime involving firearms are currently out on bail? This is a process that remains unknown, because it has yet to be the subject of empirical research.

According to Alan Young, a criminal law professor at York University's Osgoode Hall Law School, in Toronto, the reverse onus proposed by the Conservatives is a “complete shot in the dark”, because we do not even know if the current system is effective or not. The information is too fragmented to know the rate of recidivism or compliance, following court orders.

The need for this bill is dubious to say the least. The Prime Minister claims that 40% of offences involving firearms are committed by individuals out on bail. The Prime Minister quoted a police report which shows that, out of about 1,000 crimes involving guns or restricted weapons, some 40% may have been committed by individuals who were on parole, bail, probation or temporary absence.

However, according to Tony Doob, a criminologist at the University of Toronto, these statistics do not tell the whole story, since someone could be released on bail as a result of simple theft, a situation Bill C-35 does not address.

In addition, people accused of offences involving firearms are already faced with something like reverse onus. The question is whether the bill will make it possible to imprison a dangerous person who would not otherwise have been incarcerated.

• (1225)

Mr. Doob also said that Canada is not particularly lenient when it comes to releasing someone on bail. This is especially interesting since the Conservatives give the impression that this is a big threat, while the numbers do not seem to confirm that the system is lax when it comes to releasing people on bail. Statistics on incarcerations consistently show that there are more people behind bars awaiting trial than people serving sentences. I think this is worth repeating. Statistics on incarcerations consistently show that there are more people behind bars awaiting trial than people serving sentences. So we can believe that the current system does not disproportionately release people on bail.

In support of the point I have just made twice, I will add that according to Statistics Canada, in 2004, there were 125,871 Canadians in prison awaiting trial, while 83,733 people behind bars were serving court-ordered sentences.

I would also like to quote Louise Botham, president of the Criminal Lawyers Association. According to her, the court is already very careful in how it awards release on bail. She also wonders about how the bill before us will serve as a deterrent.

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Studies show that mandatory minimum sentences have no deterrent effect on crime. I don't know why a reverse onus would.

It seems quite a stretch to state or to believe that a criminal on the verge of committing a crime with a firearm will say to himself, at the very last minute, that he will not do it because of bail conditions or because of the reverse onus of proof. That is not at all what goes through a criminal's mind when he is about to commit a crime.

In the United States, incarcerating an individual in order to prevent a crime is known as the incapacitation effect. At least one study suggests that hiring more police officers is a more effective use of taxpayers' money than incarcerating individuals.

Thus, the Conservative government, true unto itself, is improvising again in matters of justice. As is too often the case, it is legislating without really knowing what it is doing because it does not have any serious studies to guide its actions.

Its measures, which may seem appealing at first glance, challenge fundamental legal rights and principles without ascertaining beforehand whether or not these measures have real benefits in terms of safety. Nevertheless, we do know that some measures—measures that the Conservative government is not implementing—would have real safety benefits. As I already mentioned, the first is maintaining the firearms registry. We know it works and that it helps police officers to do their jobs. The government proposes to dismantle it.

The other measure consists of the crime prevention programs that I described earlier. All my colleagues have been through this. We are waiting for the Minister of Public Safety to make the money available. We do not need a bill requiring three readings and debates in committee and in the House for that. We only need the Minister of Public Safety to sign the authorizations for this money to go to community groups that are very good at preventing crime. It would be much more logical for the government to take that approach than the one in this bill.

• (1230)

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask questions on two topics relating to the speaker's comments.

My first question is related to crime prevention. The member knows that the aboriginal justice strategy does great work with respect to alternative sentencing, but it almost expired. The government let it go until a couple of weeks before it was to expire. Staff were being laid off. During the budget, the government put it in for only two more years.

I would like to ask the member if he agrees with me that the government should make this a permanent program and give it long term funding so it can do its planning?

My colleague said the government had no serious studies on its crime strategy, which is true. The department did not recommend some of the bills it brought forward. There are serious studies and many of them were brought before committee. The member mentioned one of the persons due to appear at committee.

They have all suggested that the alternative sentencing proposals and the minimum sentences would make Canada a more dangerous place. This should not be done. These proposals would take training

away from criminals and put them in the wrong scenario. They would not be able to get the treatment they need. They would be put with hardened criminals. These proposals would not work and would make Canada more dangerous.

I would like the member to comment on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, I think we all agree that in matters of justice, the government clearly does know where it is going. It is absolutely illogical on one hand to make firearms more accessible and on the other to make the rules of evidence more strict and constraining for the accused. That does not make sense. The government is taking the problem by the wrong end.

My colleague talked about the first nations programs. There, too, the government does not seem to know where it is going. It is managing justice matters without a plan; I would even be tempted to say on a day by day basis. It may very well put forward measures that seem attractive and popular but they are inappropriate. The government should go back to the drawing board.

It is not enough to say we are for law and order and tough on crime. That is not what must be done. The government must do its work well and cooperate with experts who know the field. To achieve a real reduction in crime in Canada, effective measures are needed. Obviously, the government does not know where it is going.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very curious about one of the things which Bloc members and some Liberals sometimes bring up and that is their objection to this reverse onus.

It seems to me that if somebody came up to me, and it has never happened thankfully, and pointed a gun at me and pulled the trigger, and through some providential stroke of luck missed, that person might be guilty of attempted murder. By that very action that individual has already demonstrated that he or she is at least somewhat dangerous. To me there is no doubt about that.

If it were proven in court that the individual was actually guilty, which is the premise in Bill C-35, then it would be up to that individual to somehow come up with evidence proving otherwise. I think it would be virtually impossible to let these individuals out on the street just because they do not think they are dangerous. These people are dangerous.

I think it would take an extraordinary effort on their part to prove they were not dangerous. On the other hand, once a person has done that, how can a crown prosecutor prove that he or she is dangerous if this measure is not enacted? I think there is a bit of a problem here, logically speaking, in terms of objecting to this reverse onus measure.

•(1235)

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, the problem with my colleague's remarks is that it is not at all what Bill C-35 is about.

The bill is about detention before trial. It has nothing to do with the detention of a person who has been convicted. A person who is convicted is given a sentence and must serve that sentence. We are not questioning that. What we are saying is that to determine if an accused will be detained before the trial, the Crown has to prove that there is good reason to believe that it would be dangerous to let that person out on bail. That is how things are done now. In the example given by my colleague from the Conservative Party, I am pretty much convinced that any court would have concluded that someone who shoots people should probably not be out on bail.

That is how things are done now and it works. We have never heard of a case where it did not work. Therefore, there is no need to reverse the onus before the trial, claiming that what is already in the law is unacceptable. It is already in the law.

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that reverse onus has been proven legal in a number of circumstances. I believe, and I want him to clarify this for me and he even mentioned it in his speech on this topic this morning, that for organized crime and importation of drugs reverse onus is required. So, it is not the crown which has to prove someone is not a threat to society, but those who are facing the bail hearing have to prove they are not. It does not say that there is not the potential still to get bail but who is responsible for proving that.

Is the member saying to me today that the Bloc believes that potentially individuals who have been charged, but not found guilty, with a firearm related offence does not have the same amount of importance as those who have been charged with an organized crime issue or those charged with the importation of drugs?

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, the question was not as quick as the member said it would be, but I will try to provide a quick answer.

There is no reason to believe that extending current cases where there is reverse onus is justified. Basically, in our justice system, we believe in the presumption of innocence. This is the basic premise. In certain cases, the onus that is already provided in the law is reversed, but before extending it, we want to have the demonstration that this is necessary.

However, this government has never provided this. No studies support it. This is just an assumption among others, and we are opposed to sacrificing principles of natural justice for an opinion that has no justification.

•(1240)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Pursuant to order made earlier today all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of Bill C-35 are deemed put and a recorded division is

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deemed demanded and deferred until Tuesday, March 27 at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

(Division deemed demanded and deferred)

* * *

QUARANTINE ACT

The House resumed from February 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Quarantine Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in recent years several significant public health threats, such as SARS, West Nile virus and avian influenza, have prompted both the medical community and policy makers to work together to better respond to public health threats.

Responding to the SARS outbreak, the Liberal government of 2003 established the National Advisory Committee on SARS and Public Health. The committee's mandate was to provide a "third party assessment of current public health efforts and lessons learned for ongoing and future infectious disease control".

Chaired by Dr. David Naylor, the committee recommended several legislative changes to better address risks of emerging or re-emerging public health threats. One of those recommendations was to update the existing quarantine legislation, which had remained largely unchanged since 1872.

In October 2004 the Liberal government acted upon these recommendations and introduced the new Quarantine Act. It received royal assent in May 2005 and most of the bill came into force this past December.

The new act enables the federal government to respond more effectively to disease outbreaks. While each province and territory has its respective public health or emergency preparedness legislation in place, which includes the ability to isolate or detain individuals who pose a risk to public health, the new Quarantine Act enables the federal government to apply public health measures at Canadian borders in order to prevent the spread of communicable diseases entering Canada or other countries. It complements provincial and territorial health legislation that deals with provincial-territorial borders.

The act also helps Canada meet its international obligations as a signatory to the World Health Organization's revised international health regulations. These regulations aim to ensure maximum security against the international spread of disease with minimum interference with the global movement of people. These WHO regulations are scheduled to come into effect in June of this year.

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More specifically, the Quarantine Act contains provisions to divert aircraft to alternate landing sites, to designate quarantine facilities at any location in Canada, and to prevent entry to Canada of travellers who represent an imminent and severe public health risk.

The bill also created two new classes of officials: environmental health officers and screening officers. These officials, along with quarantine officers, oversee the screening assessment and, if necessary, the detention of people, vessels, goods and cargo that represent a public health risk. The presence of these officers strengthens national preparedness for future potential public health risks, including an influenza pandemic.

The bill we discuss today, Bill C-42, proposes to amend the Quarantine Act by doing three things.

First, it obligates the operators of certain conveyances to report potential health issues to quarantine officers, as opposed to officers designated by the minister as stipulated in the act at present. I have no problem with this.

Second, it requires conveyance operators to report to a quarantine officer "as soon as possible" before entering and departing from Canada. This is distinct from the current act, which stipulates that reporting be done simply before entering or departing the country. Again, I do not find this problematic.

However, it is the main amendment proposed within Bill C-42 that I have concerns about. As the act is currently written, the operators of commercial air, water and ground transport are obligated to report when they are carrying a person who has died or have reasonable grounds to suspect that any person or cargo they are carrying could cause the spread of communicable disease.

However, Bill C-42 proposes to restrict this reporting requirement to aircraft and commercial watercraft only. This means that the huge volume of truck and rail traffic and cargo that crosses our border each day would be exempt from these reporting requirements.

• (1245)

As we all know, disease-carrying cargo and passengers pose the same health threats to Canadians, irrespective of the mode of transport by which they enter the country. Therefore, I do not understand the logic behind an amendment that seeks to narrow the scope of those required to inform Canadian officials of real or suspected health threats. It would appear to me that it creates a gaping hole in our strategy to protect the health of Canadians.

I must say that I find this very odd considering the extreme measures the government is prepared to take to ward off other threats it perceives to our physical safety. Just last month, the government tried to extend the two sunset clauses within the Anti-terrorism Act that empowered authorities to detain suspected terrorists without charge, subject to release on strict bail conditions, and to permit police to force witnesses to testify in a closed court before a judge. Those measures ran counter to the basic legal rights we all share and which have served our nation well.

It is instructive, too, that the Supreme Court of Canada recently ruled against the related security certificate measures which, similarly, allowed authorities to indefinitely detain foreign-born

nationals without charge and without making public any evidence against them.

As the government well knows, the Anti-terrorism Act was drafted at a time when North American was under extreme duress and reeling from the events of 9/11. Security issues had jumped to the top of America's priority list. There was both internal and external pressure for Canada to tighten its security detection and enforcement measures.

However, it was also recognized that the preservation of civil rights is absolutely fundamental to our democracy and that it is precisely at times of stress that our commitment to civil rights is most important.

That is why the Anti-terrorism Act was drafted to ensure those clauses that withdrew longstanding fundamental civil rights were only temporary measures. It is to the great credit of the House that we had the foresight to sunset these contentious clauses, thereby forcing a sober second thought at a future date, a date which came just recently.

I find it disturbing that an issue as important as the basic charter rights of Canadians was treated in such a highly partisan and highly politicized manner by our Prime Minister in the debate surrounding the Anti-terrorism Act. I would like to address a few of the misleading ways in which the Prime Minister attempted to frame this important issue for Canadians.

As noted above, the original Anti-terrorism Act included sunset provisions in order to ensure that the measures I have outlined were reviewed again under less emotional circumstances. That is precisely what happened.

Both parliamentary and Senate committees reviewed the act. In neither case did they recommend renewing the sunset provisions as is. The Prime Minister would have us believe that these committees had fully endorsed the sunset clauses when in fact they had not. In both cases, in both houses, committees recommended various revisions to the act to ensure that proper checks were in place, checks that would counter the potential for abuse that the two sunset clauses posed.

After the committees reported, there was ample time for the Prime Minister to act upon their recommendations, but he chose not to do so. He chose to ignore these inconvenient truths when framing this discussion before the media and in the House.

Instead, he turned what should have been a very important and sober discussion around fundamental human rights into rancorous partisan gamesmanship, which brought the level of discourse in Canadian politics to a new low. He also impugned the reputation of a member of the House in an audacious effort to imply that the Liberal position on the sunset clauses was formulated in order to protect the family of a sitting member from participating in an Air-India investigation.

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This was and is ludicrous. The Prime Minister's refusal to apologize reveals a hubris that is quite extraordinary and is evidence of a value system that places personal political ambitions over a respect for truth or respect for others.

● (1250)

The Prime Minister also claimed the Liberals were flip-flopping on the Anti-terrorism Act, when he and his colleagues know full well that the insertion of the sunset clauses at the beginning of the process was designed by the Liberals to allow these clauses to expire. The Liberal position is completely in accord with the intent of the original bill.

However, if the Prime Minister wants to know what a real flip-flop looks like, he need look no further than his own income trust tax policy: now that was a flip-flop.

Next in the Prime Minister's plan was to dredge up the old tactic of accusing one's opponents of being soft on terror. This is a very odd accusation given that it was the Liberal government that brought in the Anti-terrorism Act in the first place. Perhaps another way of looking at this recent fiasco would be to consider the Prime Minister tough on human rights.

This is the other side of the coin that the Conservatives never want to discuss. Their actions, however, speak louder than words. The cancellation of the court challenges program, which was a key instrument in protecting civil rights, the cuts to funding for advocacy groups and the cuts to literacy training, all while politicizing the process of judge selection, are but a few examples of their policies in action.

The Prime Minister also tried to portray the Liberal Party as being deeply divided on the issue of the sunset clauses. Of the 101 Liberal caucus members, only a few expressed an interest in reviewing the clauses and most of these were only in favour of doing so if they were accompanied by offsetting amendments to ensure that the provisions could not be abused. This could hardly be seen as a major fissure.

What it does reveal, however, is that the Liberal Party is an open and inclusive party in which all members have a say and a healthy exchange of views is in fact encouraged. This, of course, is in contrast to the iron fist with which the Conservative cabinet and caucus are ruled. One does not need to take much time to decide which process fosters the best long-reaching policies.

Lastly, the Prime Minister tried to create the impression in the minds of Canadians that allowing the sunset clauses to expire would in some way impinge upon the ability of the RCMP to continue its investigation of the Air-India disaster. Once again, this is a politically motivated distortion that is simply unsubstantiated by the facts.

The RCMP has been investigating the Air-India accident for decades. For over five years now, RCMP members have had the Anti-terrorism Act at their disposal, and in over five years not once did they choose to use either of the two sunset clauses. I repeat: not once in over five years did the RCMP members feel they needed to use either of the two provisions that the House has now allowed to expire.

Furthermore, there have been close to 450 public inquiries in Canadian history, several of which have dealt with tragedies and legal issues of various sorts, yet never has there been a request for broader police powers by the chairs of these inquiries. They simply are not needed. Yet according to Mr. Harper, the nation's security is in imminent danger—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member for Oakville is quite experienced in this House and knows not to use the proper names of other members, but only their titles or the names of their ridings.

Ms. Bonnie Brown: I withdraw that, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister is giving us the idea that the nation's security is in imminent danger and that only these clauses could have saved it.

I would like to turn back to Bill C-42 now and revisit the contradiction between this and the Conservative position on health risks, risks, I might add, that are much more a threat to the general population than those risks posed by terrorists.

It seems apparent to me that the reduced reporting requirements proposed in Bill C-42 will expose Canadians to the introduction of diseases and, as such, it cannot be supported in its current form.

I do recognize, however, that the Quarantine Act as currently enacted may require some modification in order to ensure that its provisions can be practically implemented and enforced. However, I believe it is important that provisions be made to ensure that cargo shipped across the border, both by rail and by truck, is subject to reporting regulations similar to those required of commercial air and water operators.

I would like to work with the government in ensuring that appropriate amendments to Bill C-42 can be made, enabling the creation of a more robust Quarantine Act.

● (1255)

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for her comments. There is irony in the member's statement in regard to the Anti-terrorism Act.

Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a ringing in the audio equipment. I always seem to get ringing in my ears when I listen to Liberals. They are sometimes hard to discern.

Having said that, the member may want to reflect on the Liberals' position on the Anti-terrorism Act. On one hand they say that the two provisions are not necessary, and on the other hand they say they are necessary and that is demonstrated by the fact that the bill was introduced by the Liberal Party in the first place. For them to flip-flop on that is disappointing. We have heard that debate many times before. I am surprised the member brought it up on Bill C-42, and on that note I will focus my comments on Bill C-42.

The main thrust of the member's concern is in regard to why land travel is not included in the act. In fact, it is included in the amendments to the act. I refer the member to section 34(1), which reads:

This section applies to the operator of any of the following conveyances:

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- (a) a watercraft or aircraft that is used in the business of carrying persons or cargo; and
 (b) a prescribed conveyance.

The term “a prescribed conveyance” can be applied to the method of travel that the member is concerned about. There is less of a risk from land travel, but it is in fact addressed in the act.

With the knowledge that section 34(b) applies to any conveyance that in the future might be considered a high risk, be it a bus, train or whatever, will the member with that knowledge reconsider her position?

Ms. Bonnie Brown: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary in responding to my remarks made a statement that I find quite surprising. He said that there is less of a risk from land travel. I did not know that bacteria and viruses chose air and water travel over land travel. It would seem to me that the greatest volume of traffic entering our country comes by land.

Perhaps he means there is only one country from which people and cargo come into Canada by land and that is the United States, whereas we receive ships and airplanes from all over the world. Is he trying to imply there is less risk with people and cargo coming from the United States, or is this absence of reporting requirement for land travel simply a suggestion that our best friends and neighbours should not really need to report, whereas people from further afield should? I do not know. I just know it does not make sense to me, because I do not think germs and viruses really care which way they come into the country.

On my reference to the Anti-terrorism Act which I used in my remarks, it has been a long-held belief of mine that it is the government's main job to protect the personal security of Canadian citizens. The Canadians with whom I speak have far more worry and anxiety over two other sources that threaten their security.

One is the impact of some of these extreme weather events, the results of which most of us have watched on television, whether it was hurricane Katrina, the tsunami, or various other things, which I think is what has been the impetus behind our attempts to stop global warming.

The other thing Canadians are very worried about is the arrival in their midst of new diseases for which there are no vaccines or cures and which might spread quickly through the population. We have put a name to that, a pandemic influenza, but we know that is simply a label which is current. There could be many different kinds of diseases. The idea of a new quarantine act is as important to Canadians in protecting their health and well-being and their futures as is the anti-terrorism legislation. They are all pieces of a puzzle that are put in place by responsible governments to protect citizens.

That is why I felt quite free to use what I saw as a contradiction between the extreme measures of anti-terrorism legislation and activities and the extreme amount of money put into those things, as compared to the efforts and the money put into protecting us against disease, which threatens our health, and extreme weather events, which threaten our health, our lives and our property.

Perhaps that will explain to the parliamentary secretary why I chose to use that example.

● (1300)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to comment on the fine balance between human rights and personal liberties and security.

The parliamentary secretary shocked me by seeming to suggest that in spite of the fact that Parliament had called for a five year review for the very reason of ensuring that balance was in tune, that that was not important. We saw that the Conservatives made that insinuation this week during discussions on prisoners in Afghanistan.

The member has been a great champion of this during her time in Parliament. I wonder if she could comment on the importance of maintaining the fine balance between human liberties, human rights and security.

Ms. Bonnie Brown: Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Liberal Party and one who sat on the government side for a number of years, the thing perhaps of which I am the proudest is the achievement of balance. I am speaking of balance in terms of balancing budgets, balance in terms of balancing justice legislation against the rights of our citizens, and balance in terms of assessing the international situation as best we could given the evidence of the day. We did a fair job of that.

That is exactly why we put in the sunset provisions for those two clauses that many years ago. We feared we were stepping out of balance. Given the extreme circumstances of that particular autumn following 9/11, it seemed prudent to do that. It also seemed prudent to look further ahead because we did not know what was coming next. We put it in to ensure that we returned to the human rights balance with the terrorism legislation when it was reviewed a few years later.

There has been absolutely no flip-flop. I remember the discussions in caucus and exactly why we put in those provisions. That is why I am so proud that we sunsetted them, given the evidence we have today.

● (1305)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the critic for health, I listened intently to the member for Oakville on the Quarantine Act. She certainly went astray and talked about a number of other issues. I am going to ask her about the issues that were in her speech.

Can the member for Oakville stand in the House today and tell us that the threat of terrorism no longer exists and that is why she voted the way she did on those provisions? Has she given the same speech to members of her own party who supported us in maintaining those provisions in the Anti-terrorism Act?

She mentioned that the Liberal Party was open to debate and discussion on different items. Just this past week her own leader kicked out a member of her party who claimed that he was going to vote for our budget. Is that the kind of openness she was talking about in her discussions?

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Ms. Bonnie Brown: Mr. Speaker, I realize that the member for Burlington is fairly new to this place and has not yet learned that when one gives a speech on one topic or bill, one may draw comparisons with almost anything and everything and it is perfectly in order.

He also does not know, or maybe he has not yet learned, that it is considered that anything to do with a budget requires party discipline, as his own party demonstrated at budget time, and as we demonstrated.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Quarantine Act.

The Quarantine Act was first passed in 1872. In those days, the movement of people and goods took much longer than today. The spread of communicable disease was therefore less and it was often more localized.

At the time when the legislation was drafted, marine transportation was much more of a concern than air transportation. But the significant expansion of air transportation in the intervening decades, as compared to marine transportation, justifies the need to modernize the act.

The proposed legislation would help protect the people of Canada and Quebec from the importation of dangerous, infectious and contagious diseases and prevent the spread of these diseases beyond Canada's borders.

It is true that, with the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome, known as SARS, in 2003, the ensuing reports have emphasized the need to counter public health threats both at our borders and within our borders. We are not alone to have had to step up such measures. At that time, the World Health Organization requested that all countries do so, saying that we had to be extra careful and monitor the situation because of all these infectious diseases.

Bill C-42 would update the legislation to give effect to a specific section, namely section 34, which sets out the obligations that apply to the operators of certain conveyances in terms of informing quarantine officers of known or suspected risks of disease spreading on board their conveyances. Two other sections, specifically sections 63 and 71, as well as the schedule have also been amended to bring them in line with the new section 34.

While stressing that health falls under the exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, the Bloc Québécois supports this bill in principle.

Coming back to the bill, it is simply a question of safety, a notion of safety that we completely support. Furthermore, long before the SARS crisis or the various outbreaks of diseases carried by birds and other carriers, many countries had already begun trying to protect their citizens. I remember a trip I took to Cuba in 1985 or 1987. Cuba was already cleaning the interiors of its planes and paying particular attention to ensure that no diseases could be brought in by air travel.

The enactment repeals the Quarantine Act and replaces it with another act to prevent the introduction and spread of communicable diseases. It is applicable to persons in conveyances arriving in or in the process of departing Canada. It provides measures for the screening, health assessment and medical examination of travellers to determine if they have communicable diseases. It also provides—and this is important—measures for preventing the spread of communicable diseases, including referral to the public health authorities, detention, treatment and disinfection.

• (1310)

It provides for additional measures such as the inspection and cleansing of conveyances and cargo to ensure that they are not a source of communicable diseases. It imposes controls on the import and export of cadavers, body parts and other human remains. One never knows what could happen when such matter is brought in. We cannot know the circumstances when someone dies outside the country and whose remains are brought back to Canada. We must disinfect, at least. Furthermore, the bill contains provisions for the collection and disclosure of personal information if it is necessary to prevent the spread of communicable disease. Lastly, it provides the Minister of Health with interim order powers in the case of public health emergencies and enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with the act.

Section 34 is extremely important. This is where the bill is much more specific concerning operators of certain types of conveyances. The current act provides for an obligation to report any means of transportation, including watercraft, aircraft, train, motor vehicle, trailer and cargo container, that arrives in Canada or is in the process of departing from Canada. Moreover, any conveyance used in a business of carrying persons or cargo, or any prescribed conveyance, shall be reported. There is an obligation to notify a quarantine officer without delay. The act indicates that the operator must notify a quarantine officer as opposed to the designated authority. In the past, the operator was asked to notify the designated authority when departing from Canada or arriving in the country. Now, the operator must notify a quarantine officer. The new section 34 makes it an obligation for the operator to notify the officer as soon as the situation is known. Here is what it says:

(2) As soon as possible before a conveyance arrives at its destination in Canada, the operator shall inform a quarantine officer or cause a quarantine officer to be informed of any reasonable grounds to suspect that

(a) any person, cargo or other thing on board the conveyance could cause the spreading of a communicable disease listed in the schedule;

(b) a person on board the conveyance has died;

or (c) any prescribed circumstances exist.

As soon as possible before a conveyance departs from Canada through a departure point, the operator shall inform a quarantine officer or cause a quarantine officer to be informed of any circumstance referred to in paragraphs (2)(a) to (c) that exists.

(4) No operator contravenes subsection (2) if it is not possible for the operator to inform a quarantine officer or cause a quarantine officer to be informed before the conveyance's arrival at its destination in Canada, as long as the operator does so on the conveyance's arrival at that destination.

Thus, all doors through which some infestation or disease might enter Canada are looked at in section 34 as amended by the bill. These amendments thus clarify the obligations of operators of watercraft and aircraft when arriving in Canada or departing from Canada.

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I was saying earlier that the World Health Organization, notably in the case of the avian flu, SARS, infestations or pandemics, had asked all countries to have a law that would guarantee the physical safety and the health of each of their citizens. The majority of WHO member countries passed such laws. Unfortunately, there are still countries that are not members of the WHO and that cannot legislate in that regard, but that are easy prey, that are vulnerable to diseases. We could mention a few of them. Let us start with the first one, Taiwan. Last year, that country asked for our support so it could have a seat at the World Health Organization.

• (1315)

Canada supported Taiwan's request, but not very strongly. Nonetheless, it supported the request that this island nation of 23 million inhabitants obtain a seat at the World Health Organization, in order to protect itself and also protect other peoples and other populations.

We know that a number of illnesses that break out in China spread all the way to here. We also know that SARS first appeared in China. The Chinese travel by boat and plane. Thus, if Taiwan had been able to set up a protective mechanism, then its people might have had a much easier time containing the SARS epidemic.

It is the same for Quebec. In cattle breeding we have experienced the mad cow crisis. We know that at some point, this epidemic started out west. Unfortunately, Quebec was unable to legislate on this since we are still not considered a country.

It is very difficult for a population that can only rely on the legislation of another country to protect itself from various infectious disease. I hope that Taiwan, like Quebec and other countries, can obtain a seat at the World Health Organization, can one day be recognized as a country, can write its own laws and pass them in order to protect itself and its people.

That said, the bill before us is a good bill. I was saying earlier that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of this bill in principle. I will make the parliamentary secretary laugh by coming back to the fact that health is the exclusive responsibility of Quebec and the provinces. Nonetheless, we recognize that infectious disease such as SARS and West Nile virus know no boundaries. That is why the Bloc Québécois is in favour of this bill in principle.

As far as the proposed amendments to Bill C-42 are concerned, they apply mostly to clause 34, which applies but is not limited to the operators of ships and aircraft. These amendments are technical in order to give effect to this clause.

We will vote in favour of this bill.

• (1320)

[*English*]

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her comments. In reference to the previous speaker from the Liberal Party, I wish to state for the record that the risk at present is greater from countries other than the United States. To require bus operators, train operators and so on, and every time a person gets sick on the bus, this would be a very onerous and burdensome task. In fact, the risk factor may have all sorts of other consequences. However, the risk has changed. There are measures in the act that

deal with that. I hope that the hon. member from the Liberal Party will see that and change her position.

Given that the Bloc member says she will support us here, I gather that we can count on the Bloc support in committee as well and that we can work together to ensure the safety of all Canadians and that they can all enjoy the same safeguards.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Speaker, obviously, with a bill like this one, where the object is to protect public health, I do not see why the Bloc Québécois would not work with the governing party. A bill like this one deals with everyone's security. As far as I know, Quebec and the rest of Canada are not separated by huge fences. Infectious diseases can spread on the ground and through the air, as is the case with birds and the avian flu. They can also spread by many other means.

I do not know if I was clear enough in my speech earlier. For example, when the mad cow disease came from Alberta, we had to deal with the problem in Quebec. It was not our fault and it was not your fault either. Such a situation just happens, and we were greatly affected. The disease may come from Quebec or Manitoba or British Columbia, but we will all eventually be affected.

Therefore, in the case of a bill like this, there is no doubt that we will work with you. There is no problem.

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in her eloquent speech, my colleague talked about the World Health Organization and Taiwan. I would like her to tell us more about this topic.

• (1325)

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Speaker, we are probably all aware of what is going on with the tiny island of Taiwan. Taiwan is a very small island with a population of 23 million. These are people who want independence from China, who want sovereignty. They are located very close to China. If memory serves me, a narrow strait only 4 km wide separates Taiwan from China.

As we know, in 2003, when China was dealing with the SARS epidemic, there were no cases of the disease in Taiwan. Members may recall that at the time, China did not announce that it was facing a SARS epidemic. As far as I know, China was one of the last countries to admit that some of its people had SARS. Taiwan could have been infected. The small island has extremely competent doctors who attend meetings of the World Health Organization as observers.

Given Taiwan's population, 23 million people, this could have been disastrous because the country is so small. Those 23 million inhabitants are squeezed into a very small space. If there had been cases of SARS in Taiwan, the situation would have been dreadful.

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

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

At the time, Taiwan asked for a seat at the World Health Organization so it could stay up to date on procedures to prepare for SARS and treat the sick. China opposed Taiwan's request. Canada agreed to support Taiwan's request, which made the Taiwanese very happy. Unfortunately, their request was denied, but they still hope to have a seat at the World Health Organization one day. The World Health Organization did send Taiwan an invitation to attend because it is an Asian nation and, very often, these infectious diseases emerge in Asia.

I hope that Taiwan will get a seat at the World Health Organization. They have Canada's support, and Quebec's too, of course.

I chose this example to illustrate how important it is to cooperate in fighting epidemics and infectious diseases in a small nation.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member for Surrey North is being recognized although with a bit of trepidation because she has 20 minutes to speak, of which there is less than two minutes today.

Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will not try to do 20 minutes in 2 minutes, but I will make my opening comments.

When the act was last seriously looked at, the world was a very much smaller place. The idea that one would start in Europe and be in Canada eight hours later, as opposed to six months later or four months later, was an unheard of concept. Therefore, keeping out communicable disease was probably not foremost in everybody's mind.

People would be cognizant of the tremendous tragedy that communicable disease brought to their own countries. We only have to look at the number of people who died of plague in those days, of smallpox, to know that it was a tragedy, but within countries. The idea that tragedy would travel across the water to a continent that many people could not name or would never see was not there.

However, we live in a very different world. Many people move around the world, either for work, or for leisure or to visit family, with great frequency. People fly to Australia, some fly to England for the weekend. Some of my family did that for some time.

With so many people travelling, the potential for communicable disease to move from country to country is significantly—

• (1330)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Order, please. It is with regret that I interrupt the hon. member for Surrey North. When we next return to the study of Bill C-42, there will be 18 minutes left in her time.

[Translation]

It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

The House resumed from February 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-265, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (qualification for and entitlement to benefits), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I last spoke to the bill, I spoke of the very difficult circumstances for farm workers in Surrey who had been intimidated into signing employment insurance forms. Now people age 80 are being sued for repayment of employment insurance. That is in *Hansard*, so I will not repeat that today.

I am disappointed to hear of the Speaker's ruling about what will happen to the bill at third reading. Many deserving people could have been much better off if it were allowed to go forward.

The bill would reduce the number of eligible hours from 910 to 360. There are reasons for that, and it not so people can work less. In many circumstances women work part time. They pay employment insurance, but they are unlikely to collect it because it takes them so long to accumulate 910 hours. Many women lose a position before those hours are accumulated, particularly any kind of seasonal work, which is not just farm work. It could be tourist work or other jobs as well. Although they pay into EI, when their job is over they cannot collect it because of the 910 hour requirement. Sometimes they are the only wage earner. It has a major impact on them and their children as to what they eat, where they live and so on.

Also the bill would look at having the employment insurance calculated on the best 12 weeks of someone's employment. For some people, either seasonal workers or others, they may in the preceding weeks not earn as much money as they might have at a different time of the year. Right now it is calculated on their previous work. If it is calculated on their best 12 weeks of the year, then people would receive an amount of employment insurance that would be fairer.

This is about fairness and it is about equity. Using the best 12 weeks and reducing the number of eligible hours accomplishes that, particularly for women workers who often have the responsibility of caring for their family.

• (1335)

Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join in the discussion today on Bill C-265. I would like to thank the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst for raising the important issue of employment insurance.

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On a small personal note, during the last Parliament I was a member of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources and Skills Development and, while the member was not the regular NDP member of our committee, whenever there was a discussion about employment insurance he was certainly there putting his views forward.

Bill C-265 puts forth proposals affecting two key elements of EI. The first of these is the hourly entrance requirement for regular and special benefits. The bill proposes a reduced flat 360 hour entrance requirement.

Second, concerning the way in which benefit rates are calculated, the bill proposes establishing an approach based on the 12 best weeks of work over the last 52.

These proposals would have a profound effect on the program and, in determining if they are justified, it is important to see them in the broader context of today's labour market.

The Canadian labour market is continuing to perform exceptionally well. Statistics Canada data shows unemployment rates at the lowest level in about three decades. In addition, the share of the population that is working is at near record high levels. However, we know that even in times of high employment there are those who occasionally need the assistance of EI. Evidence indicates that the program is meeting their needs.

More than 83% of those who pay into the program and have a qualified job separation are eligible for benefits. In areas of higher unemployment, such as Atlantic Canada, the percentage of those eligible for benefits increases to more than 90%.

It is important to note too that the present system is also working well for those who wish to avail themselves of maternity, parental and sickness benefits. Evidence shows that more than 90% of employees could meet eligibility requirements for those EI special benefits.

Evidence also shows that not only are the EI eligibility requirements meeting the needs of Canadians, but so too is the time period over which claimants can receive these benefits. On average, individuals use less than two-thirds of their EI entitlement before finding employment. Even in areas of high unemployment, claimants rarely use more than 70% of their allotment. That is good news.

With respect to the bill's proposed calculation of benefits based on the 12 best weeks of work, I should remind the House that we are currently testing a pilot project in regions of high unemployment based on the best 14 weeks of work over the past 52 weeks.

This approach maintains elements of the program that evidence indicates have been successful in encouraging workforce attachment. Our aim is to balance providing adequate EI coverage while still encouraging individuals to accept all available work.

Until this pilot project is complete, we believe it would be premature to endorse any changes to the benefit rate calculation.

EI is there for Canadians, both men and women. In fact, I would like to address the misconception that has been raised in the House that EI is not serving the needs of women.

Looking first at access to EI, women's coverage rate is high. This is true for both regular and special benefits. According to Statistics Canada, for those who paid premiums and were laid off or quit with cause, 87% of women were eligible for regular benefits in 2005.

In the same year, among women with children aged 12 months or younger, over 85% received maternity and/or parental benefits if they had insurable employment in the previous year.

If we look more closely at maternity and parental benefits, we see that contrary to opinions raised in the House, EI is actually serving women better through enhancements made to the EI benefits. These changes include: extending benefit duration from six months to one full year; lowering entrance requirements to 600 hours of insurable work; waiving the waiting period for a second parent claiming the benefit; and, the ability to work while receiving parental benefits.

Women have greater access and better benefits while increasing their ability to maintain their labour market attachment. In fact, women accounted for 85% of claimants benefiting from those enhancements in 2004-05.

Women are also the principal beneficiaries of the family supplement provision, representing 74% of claims. Those benefits enable individuals in low income households with children to receive up to 80% of their insured earnings.

Clearly, EI has a strong track record in serving Canadian women in an effective and timely manner. I would also like to add that the Employment Insurance Commission monitors, examines and assesses how well EI is serving all Canadians.

● (1340)

The commission's annual monitoring and assessment report is tabled in Parliament each year. It provides comprehensive information on the effectiveness of EI, including analysis on the adequacy of EI benefits for both men and women. The report provides sound, gender based analysis that informs decision making on any potential EI changes.

We will continue to draw upon extensive monitoring assessment and evaluation of the program in this regard.

Canada's new government is committed to building a strong, competitive economy and a dynamic and flexible labour market. We introduced new measures in budget 2007 to ensure Canadians can continue to succeed and enjoy a high standard of living. This is what Canadians want.

As I stated earlier, our labour market is performing well.

Our government believes it is important that the EI program strike a balance between providing temporary income support for Canadians while they find new employment and keeping individuals active in the workforce. EI is working well to achieve this goal and to maintain this balance.

We will continue to monitor and assess the EI program and make changes when we have demonstrable evidence that change is warranted.

The proposals contained in Bill C-265 do not meet this criteria and, as such, we cannot support the bill.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill C-265, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act, which seeks to bring down to 360 hours the number of hours of work required to qualify for EI benefits. I have had the pleasure of working very closely with my NDP colleague from Acadie—Bathurst, who sponsored Bill C-265.

During the last Parliament, as the chair of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, I tabled a report on employment insurance funds in February 2005.

At the time, the subcommittee examined the use made of employment insurance funds and the surpluses that were accumulated, surpluses that continue to be accumulated and keep growing. The EI fund is one that is not benefiting those paying into it. Indeed, it is becoming increasingly difficult for workers to take advantage of a program they have been contributing to.

[*English*]

It has been pointed out by previous speakers that only 32% of women who contributed to the EI plan currently qualify for benefits and that only 37% of men who have employment qualify for employment insurance benefits even if they contributed to the plan.

What is the use of a fund, which now stands at close to \$50 billion, if that fund is not doing what it is supposed to do, which is to help the very people that it was designed to help?

At this point, I want to congratulate my colleague, the member for Acadie—Bathurst, for his hard work on this file and for his single-minded determination.

[*Translation*]

Recommendation 10 of the standing committee's report states:

The Committee recommends that the government implement a uniform 360 hours qualification requirement, irrespective of regional unemployment rates or the type of benefit. This would establish a qualification requirement based on a 30-hour week over a 12-week period.

This was a key recommendation we made to the minister at the time, because it applies not only to workers in urban areas but also to those in the regions. Ours is a country with very clear-cut seasons. Our society relies heavily on seasonal workers, be it in the fisheries industry or in other industries where one can only work at certain times of the year.

[*English*]

In 2006, close to 15,123 foreign seasonal workers came to Ontario from Mexico and the Caribbean. Under the seasonal workers program, the SAWP, agricultural workers from Mexico and the Caribbean come here every year to help in harvesting our crops. For the past 10 years, workers coming to Canada under this program

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have been overwhelming male, accounting for 97% of the total in 2004.

Our country cannot function without this supplementary source of reliable and qualified seasonal labour to ensure our crops are planted and harvested before the winter. Canada has even moved to increase the number of workers from Guatemala over the past two or three years, even though they are not formally included in the program.

In the past 10 years, Mexico and Jamaica have become the two leading source countries for agricultural workers. These countries accounted for 53%, or 10,780 people, and 28%, or 5,736 people, in 2004. Mexico, however, has seen its participation rise from around 5,000 workers a year in the early 1990s to over 10,000 in each of the past four years, both on a stock and flow basis. Other notable source countries are Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados.

● (1345)

[*Translation*]

Hon. members probably wonder why I am referring to these workers in today's debate. While we depend on their work for food, while we require them to contribute to the employment insurance fund, these workers are another group that cannot benefit from the EI program, because they are temporary foreign workers. Our system is organized in such a way that they are forced to contribute to the employment insurance fund, but they cannot benefit from it.

Is it fair? Perhaps these people should be exempted from having to contribute to the program, or else their money should be used to set up training programs to allow them to develop their skills and their knowledge of the industry. This way, their country would benefit more from their experience, and not just from their financial contribution.

After a lot of pressure by the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union-Canada, the UFCW, these workers finally became eligible for family allowances, in 2001. The UFCW sees this progress as a first step in its fight for equality. In its June 2006 report, it reiterated that migrant workers should not be forced to make employment insurance contributions if they do not have full access to benefits.

This issue could be challenged in court under section 15 of the Charter, which provides that every individual has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination. If the union wins its case, foreign seasonal workers will have full access to employment insurance benefits.

[*English*]

We are talking about respect and dignity for our workers who pay into the employment insurance fund. I think all parties in this House, perhaps with the exception of the party across from me, agree on this.

I agree with some of the members who have spoken before me when they say that the entire EI system and the act need to be reviewed and overhauled to reflect the changing needs of our society and the Canadian workplace.

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We, as leaders who were elected to govern, cannot afford to consistently ignore the needs of our electorate. Our population is aging. We will be even more dependent on all types of foreign workers and we will always be dependent on seasonal agricultural workers. Either that or we ourselves will need to help the farmers harvest our own food.

Our society is also moving toward increased part time work.

[*Translation*]

Are we going to continue to behave in this fashion with workers in our country, that is by ignoring their needs?

I hope that, regardless of the flaws that this bill may have, we will ignore them and we will adopt it at second reading, so that it can be referred to a standing committee for a more in-depth review.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to discuss this issue.

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to take part in this debate and to deliver a speech on Bill C-265, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (qualification for and entitlement to benefits), which aims at improving the employment insurance plan. I take the opportunity to salute my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst. I remember his early days in politics, which were very inspiring as a matter of fact. He used to put the Liberals in their place; they had been in power for a bit too long. He did the same for the Conservatives who, before them, were also not much help to the workers who had contributed and who are still contributing to the employment insurance plan. Just like the previous government, the present government continues not to give back to the workers the money they deserve and need when times get tough. The Bloc Québécois endorses the member's position. This is frankly an excellent initiative on the part of my NDP colleague from Acadie—Bathurst.

First and foremost, I would like to emphasize that this is a good bill. Here are three points showing this. First, by lowering the threshold for becoming a major attachment claimant to 360 hours, it makes special benefits available to those with that level of insurable employment. Second, the bill sets the benefit payable to 55% of the average weekly insurable earnings during the highest-paid 12 weeks in the 12-month period preceding the interruption of earnings. Third, the bill reduces the qualifying period before receiving benefits and removes the distinctions made in the qualifying period on the basis of the regional unemployment rate. This is very good.

This bill touches on a number of important points. First, employment insurance is no longer an assistance program. It has become a hidden tax because not all those who contribute have access to the program when they become unemployed. Under the Liberals, the employment insurance fund was used to balance the budget even though that is not at all the purpose of employment insurance. Although the Conservatives voted in favour of an independent employment insurance fund, the surpluses generated remain in the consolidated fund and are still being used for other purposes. That was the case last September 25 and with this budget as well. We do not have an independent employment insurance fund and this issue must remain in the forefront. This is a priority for the Bloc Québécois.

Another important point is the Auditor General's report of November 23, 2004, which reported at the time that the government continued—as she said—to loot the employment insurance fund despite the intentions of parliamentarians. Furthermore, the powers of the Employment Insurance Commission, whose membership includes contributors, will apparently be suspended for yet another year. That happened in 2004 and it has not changed. This situation is deplorable.

Conservatives voted against improvements to the employment insurance program in Bill C-278 and against the Bloc Québécois Bill C-269. It is about time that these individuals, who have been elected, respond to the needs of citizens, of the workers who need this fund—which is an insurance fund—when they lose their jobs.

As for the Bloc Québécois, it is still dead set against the looting of the employment insurance fund and proposes, among other things, that an independent fund and commission be established. The Bloc Québécois also demands that the federal government pay back misused money. That is very important. Money taken from the employment insurance fund must be returned to those who paid into it, the employers and employees, for when it is needed by workers who lose their jobs.

● (1350)

Improving the system for workers in a vulnerable situation is a matter of principle that should be defended. In the past two years, the Bloc Québécois has worked tirelessly on improving this system and we have another example of that today.

The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities tabled or passed in its report of February 2005, no fewer than 28 very important recommendations that have to be considered and incorporated into the bill in order to respond to the needs of the workers. I will not read the 28 items, but I will cite a few to illustrate the importance and urgency of swiftly moving forward with the bill we are talking about today.

First, for example, the committee recommends a uniform 360 hour qualification requirement. This criterion, which was proposed by the committee at the time, is now in the bill. The committee also recommended a calculation based on the best 12 weeks of insurable employment; that is how benefits should be calculated for those who lose their jobs. The committee recommended increasing the benefit rate from 55% to 60% of average earnings before workers end up in a vulnerable situation. The committee also recommended that the government consider extending employment insurance coverage to self-employed workers. This is very important. This is a situation that did not exist before, or was quite rare at one time. Now it is a reality and these people should have the opportunity to receive employment insurance by contributing to it, of course, and being eligible for it.

The committee also recommended removing the arm's-length relationship clause within the employment insurance criteria, and eliminating the waiting period for those engaged in approved training. Furthermore, the committee recommended that individuals who take part in training to improve their status and perfect their skills should not be penalized, because they will be taking a course while receiving EI benefits, for instance. I could give countless other arguments, but let us move on.

The bill would reduce the minimum qualifying period to 360 hours of work for everyone—as we heard earlier—but the benefit period would vary with the region and the regional rate of unemployment. In comparison to the current figures, the new system would represent an average increase of five weeks in the benefit period and an increase in the maximum benefit period from 45 to 50 weeks. In regions with high unemployment—13% or more—it would provide between 30 and 50 weeks of benefits, depending on the hours worked and the unemployment rate.

For Quebec's high unemployment regions, however, it would substantially reduce what we call the spring gap or black hole. For example, in Gaspé, where the unemployment rate as of October 7, 2006, was 17.6%, a person who worked 360 hours would be eligible for 36 weeks of benefits.

I could go on. Nonetheless, we can clearly see the relevance of this bill, which is extremely important for all workers throughout Quebec and Canada.

• (1355)

[English]

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate on Bill C-265.

I would first like to join other colleagues from all parties who have acknowledged the work done by the member for Acadie—Bathurst and the commitment he has to this issue and to unemployed people.

As a relative newcomer to this place, I want to say that he sets a real example and is an excellent role model. A lot of the veteran members tell us, at least they did before the minority governments, to spend the first couple of years getting to know the ropes, how the place works and what our role is, and to get things settled in our ridings, but to eventually get to the point where we focus on an area that matters, an area that matters to us, matters to our constituents and makes a difference to the country.

The member for Acadie—Bathurst has done that and I think he has done it in an exemplary way, to the point that in 1998-99 he travelled across the entire country, visited every province and one of the territories, which at that time was 50%, and came up with a report that spoke to the inadequacies of EI, then called UI, at that time.

That is almost 10 years ago. As a footnote, let me tell members what I noticed as I was going through the report. The second sentence notes that in 1998 the accumulated UI surplus, as it was called then when it was unemployment insurance, reached \$20 billion.

Private Members' Business

What an enormous number that is until we compare it to the number that exists today and that happens to be \$50 billion in surplus.

An hon. member: Mercy.

Mr. David Christopherson: Yes, and it was \$20 billion 10 years ago and the alarm was raised by the member for Acadie—Bathurst, who said that Canada could do better. He said then that Canada had a bigger obligation than it was providing for people who find themselves without a job. Now, 10 years later, not nearly enough has happened.

As for this \$50 billion, let us be clear about it right off the bat. Unlike most things that we deal with here, and notwithstanding the Speaker's ruling regarding whether this bill requires a royal recommendation or not, the fact remains that none of that \$50 billion is what we would normally call taxpayers' money.

Let me say that again because it is really important: the \$50 billion surplus that now exists in the EI fund is not taxpayers' money. That money is paid in premiums by workers and employers.

Obviously employees pay because they are the ones to benefit. They have an obligation to pay part of the premiums to support the fund. I have no problem with that.

Quite frankly, businesses are paying into the fund because they are in a society and an economy in Canada where they can make a lot of money. We have a great economy in this country, and if they are going to take some of that money by way of profit for their company, they have certain obligations to the rest of the country. One of those obligations is to put some money, by way of premiums, into a fund that helps deal with the catastrophe of what happens when a working family loses a job.

So what are we asking for today in Bill C-265? Is the member asking for such an enormous amount? Is this such an unreasonable, wild-eyed, lefty and kind of crazy idea? Is that what the member has in front of us? No, it is quite the contrary.

Bill C-265 seeks to do two main things. In doing these two things, the member for Acadie—Bathurst is trying to bring justice to this issue because there is a real and inherent unfairness in this chamber and, quite frankly, we have had enough of government members talking to us about the broader context, which is what I heard them talk about this morning.

They say the reason we cannot do this for workers is that we have to look at the broader context. Those members should not talk to us about the broader context when only 32% of the women who pay EI premiums qualify and when only 37% of men who pay EI premiums qualify.

Private Members' Business

•(1400)

Members of the government talk about 85%. Do not be snowed by them. If we look carefully, the 85% speaks to those who are eligible. We were sort of wondering where did the other 15% go because they are already eligible, but there are people who are eligible who get a job immediately, which is the usual case, or perhaps they do not apply because they know they are going to another job or are in the process of moving. There are reasons that that 15% exists. Do not for a moment let government members or Liberals who defend this also say that the 85% negates the earlier statistics. The 85% represents those who qualify. If people qualify, they are going to get it.

We are talking about people who do not qualify because the rules of eligibility are too narrow. That is why only 32% of women and only 37% of men now qualify.

Let us stand back and look at a different broader context. There is \$50 billion in a fund that is there exclusively to help Canadians who, through no fault of their own, have lost their jobs. The rules, however, are set in such a way that only 32% of all the women and 37% of all the men who pay premiums actually qualify to get the benefit.

Let us think about that. Let us think about people and their family members and how many are making those payments. They look at their pay stubs and that money is coming off every week or every two weeks, but it is insurance. It is insurance against disaster.

When that job loss notice lands on the kitchen table, there are literally millions of families who immediately go into crisis. This money is there to help them through that. Where does the government or any other government get off saying they cannot have that money because somehow it is going to wreck the national economy? The money is already there. Businesses have done what they are supposed to do. Workers have done what they are supposed to do. Why is the government not doing what it is supposed to do and making sure that much needed money gets into the hands of the families that need it?

That is why we are so proud to stand here with our colleague, the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, in support of Bill C-265. It brings much needed justice to unemployed workers and their families who quite frankly are getting shafted, whether it is by the Conservatives or the Liberals, but it is time it stopped. It ought to stop with this bill. Let us bring some fairness to this place and give people what they are entitled to.

We are proud to stand united with the member. We urge everyone to please look at this. It is a minority government. We can do anything as individual parliamentarians. Members should ask themselves if it was their son or daughter, or mom or dad who was denied eligibility to a fund they paid into, how they would feel about that in terms of Canadian justice. This bill is about justice for workers. It deserves to pass.

•(1405)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to address Bill C-265, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act.

I would first like to commend the members of the New Democratic Party and the member for Acadie—Bathurst for their ongoing interest in enhancing Canada's employment insurance program, one of the key elements of our social safety net.

Our government is open to making improvements to the employment insurance program, but since this is such a very important program, we must be sure that any changes must truly be for the better.

This bill proposes dramatic changes to qualification for and entitlement to employment insurance benefits. While I do not doubt the sincerity and the intentions of the member who has proposed this bill, there is no evidence to suggest that these changes would improve employment insurance and every reason to believe that they would not.

One of the program's chief goals is to encourage attachment to the labour market. In other words, the program should encourage Canadians to seek and to retain employment.

To demonstrate the potential negative impact of this bill, I think it would be useful to examine just how well the program is currently working.

The system as it is currently structured is meeting claimants' needs. The Employment Insurance Commission produces an annual monitoring and assessment report to provide information on whether or not the program is working effectively. The 2005 report makes it clear that when Canadians need employment insurance, it is there for them both in terms of the amount they receive and how long their benefits last.

In fiscal 2004-05, for example, the program provided approximately \$13 billion in income benefits to some two million Canadians. More than 83% of the unemployed who had paid into the program and had a recent job separation were eligible for benefits. Moreover, more than 90% of employees met the eligibility requirements for special benefits, such as sickness, maternity or parental benefits.

Ongoing analysis also indicates that the duration of benefits is also meeting the needs of Canadian workers. On average, regular beneficiaries collect less than two-thirds of their regular benefits. The number of beneficiaries who are exhausting their benefits is declining. In fact, the benefit exhaustion rate has been steadily declining since 1996.

All the evidence available suggests that the employment insurance program is meeting the needs of claimants. Any program can be improved, but before we make dramatic changes, we need to make sure that the outcomes will be positive.

This brings me back to the bill in front of the House today. Among its provisions, the proposed legislation seeks to introduce a flat 360 hour entrance requirement for regular and for special benefits. This would eliminate the variable entrance requirement, as well as provisions for new and returning entrants. The bill also seeks to introduce a best 12 weeks formula for calculating income benefits.

Private Members' Business

I believe, taken together, these proposed changes would undermine the program's focus on labour market attachment. To put it another way, the changes could reduce incentives to seek employment. As we all know, the Canadian economy is facing growing labour shortages and one of the government's policies is to promote participation in the workforce.

Let me specifically detail my concerns with the bill.

First, in a region with high unemployment, it can be more difficult to obtain work and to build up the necessary hours to qualify for employment insurance. That is why the program as it is currently structured has put in place variable entrance requirements. Through this policy, the program adjusts entrance requirements each month to reflect unemployment rates by region. As unemployment rates go up, entrance requirements go down and benefits are extended. This has proven to be a sensible approach to address regional disparities in economic opportunities.

The flat rate proposed by the bill would dismantle this system. It would essentially favour Canadians who live in regions with low unemployment, who would likely have an easier time meeting the lower entrance requirements. I am concerned about the fairness of this proposal in changing the variable entrance requirement. Reducing the entrance requirements would also have a very marginal impact on the number of people who would qualify for benefits.

There is no vast pool of applicants being turned down for benefits because of high entrance requirements. In fact, more than 83% of unemployed people who have paid into the program and who have become unemployed through no fault of their own are eligible to receive benefits.

• (1410)

Second, I am also concerned that the bill would eliminate the 910 hour entrance requirement for new entrants to the labour force and for those re-entering after an extended absence. The 910 hour entrance requirement strengthens the link between hours of work and entitlement to benefits. It helps present a cycle of reliance on employment insurance. Indeed, the last four monitoring and assessment reports suggest that the current entrance requirements encourage workforce attachment. This is not a provision we should idly discard. That is why the government launched a pilot project recently to test eligibility thresholds for new entrants and for re-entrants into the workforce.

The pilot project drops the entrance requirements from 910 hours to 840 hours, benefiting more than 16,000 individuals each year. However, before we embark on such significant changes to the entrance requirements, we should await the results of the pilot project.

Third, the bill also proposes to calculate and employment insurance benefits based on the best 12 weeks of earnings over a 52 week period preceding a claim. Again, it would be premature to accept this change without sound evidence.

To that end, the government is currently running a pilot project known as the "best 14 weeks". It is testing the impact of the very same principle that the proposal in the bill seeks to address. This initiative will test labour market impacts of improving incentives for

individuals to accept all available work, including weeks of work that are shorter than their normal full weeks. It will also test whether employers facing labour shortages will have access to additional workers. Consequently we should await the results of the pilot project and make a decision informed by logic, fairness and the evidence.

Fourth, the reason why I think we should also oppose the bill is that it extends benefits for employment insurance in a way that is not accessible to all Canadians. For example, the area that I represent, the greater Toronto area, has a much lower percentage of the workforce participating in the employment insurance program than other regions of the country. There is evidence to show that this is a result of the many new Canadians who have recently arrived in the country and who participate in the workforce but do not participate in employment insurance. They are in occupations that are often self-employed and are not eligible to participate in employment insurance programs. By extending the employment insurance program to greater entitlements than is presently the case, we are in effect not creating a greater benefit for those newer Canadians living in some of the country's larger cities like the greater Toronto area.

There is evidence to suggest that these new Canadians are some of the most disadvantaged in our society, that they are increasingly falling behind in their social outcomes, their poverty levels, their unemployment rates and the like. This is not something that is unbeknownst to public policy-makers. It is something that has been highlighted by many organizations, including the United Way of Greater Toronto. By extending benefits, especially benefits like caregiver benefits, we would not include this group, many of whom are disadvantaged.

For these four reasons, we should oppose the bill. I urge all members of the House to vote against the bill.

• (1415)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Before I recognize the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, I want to advise him it would be useful for him to watch the clock. He will be interrupted at 2:25 p.m. so I can recognize the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst who has the right of reply.

The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the warning.

[*English*]

We have already heard many of the benefits of the employment insurance system. It is a valued social program. All of us in the House agree that it has proven its helpfulness and usefulness. When we consider the positive impact that it has had for children and parents, we know it has addressed the aspect of a financial burden in stressful times. However, inequities remain in the act, which is why it needs a full review and I am pleased to bring these to the attention of the House today.

In 2000, the country was divided into economic regions for the purpose of determining benefits.

Private Members' Business

Thunder Bay, which is part of my riding of Thunder Bay—Rainy River, which is defined as a metropolitan area, became its own economic region, identified as number 37. Anything outside of Thunder Bay falls in the economic code of number 38. The difference between these two economic regions is immense.

For example, Mary lives in the city of Thunder Bay and Jennifer lives in Gillies, which is about 10 minutes outside of Thunder Bay. Both ladies work at company ABC. If company ABC has a work shortage and lays off a dozen of its employees, including Mary and Jennifer, both would apply for EI benefits.

Mary's application would fall under economic region number 37 for the city of Thunder Bay. She is required to have a minimum of 665 hours of work to qualify for the benefits.

Jennifer's application falls under economic region number 38 for northern Ontario. She is required to have a minimum of 525 hours of work to qualify for the benefits.

Under economic region number 37, Mary is eligible for a minimum of 15 weeks and a maximum of 38 weeks of benefits.

Under economic region number 38, Jennifer is eligible for a minimum of 26 weeks and a maximum of 45 weeks of benefits.

Those two individuals live just 10 minutes apart but Jennifer can get up to seven weeks more benefits than Mary for doing the same job at the same business.

Further, Jennifer's required hours are 525 compared to 665 for Mary. That is a 140 hour difference. This is a serious inequity that needs to be addressed.

Let us go quickly to severance pay.

Hundreds of forestry workers have been laid off at plants across my riding. Many of these individuals have worked for over 20 years at the same company. They have now lost their jobs due to global challenges, high fibre costs, high energy costs and, after so many years of dedicated service, these employees are entitled to severance pay to help them make a new start.

The employment insurance program views severance pay as a privilege, not an entitlement of their years of service as a dedicated employee. All severance must be allocated before employment insurance kicks in. I am aware of many constituents who have waited nearly a full year before being able to receive employment insurance benefits.

I strongly disagree with this punishing view of severance. Severance should be fully applicable to downsized employees to use as they will without penalty. If the penalty were not applied to severance, individuals would be better able to use that allotment to improve their lives, to pay for retraining, to start up a new business venture or to partner in an existing business. In reality, this penalty serves as a disincentive for these employees.

I recently received an e-mail from Shaun, an employee of Bowater for 27 years before he was permanently laid off. He views that \$50 billion fund that he has been paying into for those 27 years as something vital to take care of him and his five children.

• (1420)

However, when we really examine the nature of a support network, it must be fair. It must induce respect and dignity, and that is why with this private member's bill before us is an opportunity to review and improve it.

Indeed, I would have to say to the members opposite, rather than *carte blanche* opposing this, let us have a truly meaningful, open and thorough review. I believe in this way we can make a positive difference.

All of us as elected representatives receive overtures. In fact, all of these cases that will come to us have that element of sorrow because people's lives have been disrupted. They have to decide what they will do. This is where a caring and compassionate country eases that burden, takes the pressure off and guides these people through the difficult times.

Indeed, a caring society and one that is indeed not only having a budget year but is having a budget in the EI fund is where I believe must be more sharing, more generous indeed, so that these people can carry through.

I do not think that there is anybody in the House who has not spoken to people experiencing those kinds of difficulties. When one sees it, then one realizes that in a fortunate country our measurement is how we treat those who are not having the same fortune.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the members who have spoken about Bill C-265, a bill that is very important to me.

I think this bill is even more important to workers. I am talking about the 800,000 workers who are not eligible for employment insurance, yet still contribute to it. This bill is also important to the 1.2 million Canadian children who are hungry. The cuts made to employment insurance have contributed to making these children poorer. When parents lose their jobs, the children and families suffer directly.

I would like to thank the Bloc Québécois member for Chambly—Borduas, the Conservative member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, the Liberal member for Laval—Les Îles, the Conservative member for Wellington—Halton Hills, the Liberal member for Cape Breton—Canso, the Bloc Québécois member for Gatineau, the Liberal member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, the Conservative member for Blackstrap, the NDP member for Surrey North, and the NDP member for Hamilton Centre, as well as all those who have spoken over the past 10 years, as long as I have sat here in the House of Commons.

It is false to say that 85% of workers are eligible for employment insurance, as the government claims. This was also the message the Liberals were sending when they were in power. The fact is that only 32% of women and 38% of men who contribute to the system receive employment insurance. This is not right.

Private Members' Business

EI belongs to men and women who lose their job. Just this morning, *L'Acadie Nouvelle* ran an article about a western company that came to Caraquet to meet workers. About 400 workers were at the meeting and were ready to move out west to work. Some would say that it is fine since they would find a job there. But what will be the results of EI cuts? We are destroying the seasonal fishing industry.

Last year, for the first time in its history, Prince Edward Island had to get workers from Russia because there were no more local people interested in participating in the fishing industry that is so dear to our heart in the Atlantic region.

The aim of the bill is not to steal the government's money. Quite the contrary, it says that the money belongs to the workers. If the government does not want people to benefit from EI, it only has to create jobs and stimulate economic development. Let us make people work but do not let them die from hunger.

We receive calls from people who tell us that they do not have money, they do not have benefits and they do not want to leave their family. They want to work in their community, in their own province. But see the situation the government has created.

This morning, I was disappointed that the Speaker of the House said we need a royal recommendation and that there will be no vote without a royal recommendation. That is why I am asking my Conservative colleagues to vote for this bill at second reading. We have to bring experts before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, the parliamentary committee responsible for employment insurance. We have to lay the cards on the table and stop saying that 85% of people who pay into the employment insurance fund are eligible for benefits, which is not true. They should stop saying things like that. The government must understand once and for all that only 32% of women and 38% of men are eligible for employment insurance. These statistics were provided by Human Resources and Social Development Canada and by experts.

What is the upshot of this? The best 12 weeks. It is shameful that under our employment insurance regime, workers receive only 55% of their salary. Moreover, to punish them further, there are 14-, 15- and 17-week categories. Workers are being punished twice over.

The government says that workers are dependent on employment insurance. That is not true. The government is dependent on employment insurance because it balances its budget and promises a zero deficit at the expense of men and women who have lost their jobs, at the expense of children who should be in school and at the expense of people who need that money to feed their families.

• (1425)

For all these reasons, I hope the government will change its mind. I would like to see the Liberals, Bloc members, Conservatives and NDPers set aside their partisanship. We must give back to our workers the program that belongs to them. If we do not want people on employment insurance, we must create jobs and stimulate economic development. Our citizens will have jobs and will not need this program.

I can assure you that people in Atlantic Canada, the Gaspé, northern Ontario are not lazy nor are those who have lost their jobs in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba or in the Northwest Territories. Canadians are a valiant people and they should be given back the program that belongs to them.

• (1430)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): It being 2:30 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Pursuant to Standing Order 93 the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 28 immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

[*Translation*]

It being 2:32 p.m., the House is adjourned until Monday at 11 a. m., pursuant to Standing Order 24.

The House adjourned at 2:32 p.m.

APPENDIX

**ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS WITH THEIR
CONSTITUENCIES, PROVINCE OF CONSTITUENCY
AND POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS;
COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE,
THE MINISTRY AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY**

CHAIR OCCUPANTS

The Speaker

HON. PETER MILLIKEN

The Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole

HON. BILL BLAIKIE

The Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole

MR. ROYAL GALIPEAU

The Assistant Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole

MR. ANDREW SCHEER

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

HON. PETER MILLIKEN

MS. LIBBY DAVIES

MR. MICHEL GUIMOND

HON. JAY HILL

MR. JAMES MOORE

MR. JOE PRESTON

HON. KAREN REDMAN

HON. LUCIENNE ROBILLARD

HON. PETER VAN LOAN

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

First Session—Thirty Nine Parliament

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Abbott, Jim, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage	Kootenay—Columbia	British Columbia	CPC
Ablonczy, Diane, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance	Calgary—Nose Hill	Alberta	CPC
Albrecht, Harold	Kitchener—Conestoga	Ontario	CPC
Alghabra, Omar	Mississauga—Erindale	Ontario	Lib.
Allen, Mike	Tobique—Mactaquac	New Brunswick	CPC
Allison, Dean	Niagara West—Glanbrook	Ontario	CPC
Ambrose, Hon. Rona, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Western Economic Diversification	Edmonton—Spruce Grove	Alberta	CPC
Anders, Rob	Calgary West	Alberta	CPC
Anderson, David, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board	Cypress Hills—Grasslands	Saskatchewan	CPC
André, Guy	Berthier—Maskinongé	Québec	BQ
Angus, Charlie	Timmins—James Bay	Ontario	NDP
Arthur, André	Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier	Québec	Ind.
Asselin, Gérard	Manicouagan	Québec	BQ
Atamanenko, Alex	British Columbia Southern Interior	British Columbia	NDP
Bachand, Claude	Saint-Jean	Québec	BQ
Bagnell, Hon. Larry	Yukon	Yukon	Lib.
Bains, Hon. Navdeep	Mississauga—Brampton South	Ontario	Lib.
Baird, Hon. John, Minister of the Environment	Ottawa West—Nepean	Ontario	CPC
Barbot, Vivian	Papineau	Québec	BQ
Barnes, Hon. Sue	London West	Ontario	Lib.
Batters, Dave	Palliser	Saskatchewan	CPC
Beaumier, Colleen	Brampton West	Ontario	Lib.
Bélangier, Hon. Mauril	Ottawa—Vanier	Ontario	Lib.
Bell, Catherine	Vancouver Island North	British Columbia	NDP
Bell, Don	North Vancouver	British Columbia	Lib.
Bellavance, André	Richmond—Arthabaska	Québec	BQ
Bennett, Hon. Carolyn	St. Paul's	Ontario	Lib.
Benoit, Leon	Vegreville—Wainwright	Alberta	CPC
Bernier, Hon. Maxime, Minister of Industry	Beauce	Québec	CPC
Bevilacqua, Hon. Maurizio	Vaughan	Ontario	Lib.
Bevington, Dennis	Western Arctic	Northwest Territories	NDP
Bezan, James	Selkirk—Interlake	Manitoba	CPC
Bigras, Bernard	Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie	Québec	BQ
Black, Dawn	New Westminster—Coquitlam	British Columbia	NDP
Blackburn, Hon. Jean-Pierre, Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec	Jonquière—Alma	Québec	CPC
Blaikie, Hon. Bill, The Deputy Speaker	Elmwood—Transcona	Manitoba	NDP
Blais, Raynald	Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine	Québec	BQ
Blaney, Steven	Lévis—Bellechasse	Québec	CPC
Bonin, Raymond	Nickel Belt	Ontario	Lib.
Bonsant, France	Compton—Stanstead	Québec	BQ

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Boshcoff, Ken	Thunder Bay—Rainy River	Ontario	Lib.
Bouchard, Robert	Chicoutimi—Le Fjord	Québec	BQ
Boucher, Sylvie, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages	Beauport—Limoilou	Québec	CPC
Bourgeois, Diane	Terrebonne—Blainville	Québec	BQ
Breitkreuz, Garry	Yorkton—Melville	Saskatchewan	CPC
Brison, Hon. Scott	Kings—Hants	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Brown, Bonnie	Oakville	Ontario	Lib.
Brown, Gord	Leeds—Grenville	Ontario	CPC
Brown, Patrick	Barrie	Ontario	CPC
Bruinooog, Rod, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians	Winnipeg South	Manitoba	CPC
Brunelle, Paule	Trois-Rivières	Québec	BQ
Byrne, Hon. Gerry	Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Calkins, Blaine	Wetaskiwin	Alberta	CPC
Cannan, Ron	Kelowna—Lake Country	British Columbia	CPC
Cannis, John	Scarborough Centre	Ontario	Lib.
Cannon, Hon. Lawrence, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities	Pontiac	Québec	CPC
Cardin, Serge	Sherbrooke	Québec	BQ
Carrie, Colin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry	Oshawa	Ontario	CPC
Carrier, Robert	Alfred-Pellan	Québec	BQ
Casey, Bill	Cumberland—Colchester— Musquodoboit Valley	Nova Scotia	CPC
Casson, Rick	Lethbridge	Alberta	CPC
Chamberlain, Hon. Brenda	Guelph	Ontario	Lib.
Chan, Hon. Raymond	Richmond	British Columbia	Lib.
Charlton, Chris	Hamilton Mountain	Ontario	NDP
Chong, Hon. Michael	Wellington—Halton Hills	Ontario	CPC
Chow, Olivia	Trinity—Spadina	Ontario	NDP
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre	Ontario	NDP
Clement, Hon. Tony, Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Ontario	CPC
Coderre, Hon. Denis	Bourassa	Québec	Lib.
Comartin, Joe	Windsor—Tecumseh	Ontario	NDP
Comuzzi, Hon. Joe	Thunder Bay—Superior North	Ontario	Ind.
Cotler, Hon. Irwin	Mount Royal	Québec	Lib.
Crête, Paul	Montmagny—L'Islet— Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup	Québec	BQ
Crowder, Jean	Nanaimo—Cowichan	British Columbia	NDP
Cullen, Nathan	Skeena—Bulkley Valley	British Columbia	NDP
Cullen, Hon. Roy	Etobicoke North	Ontario	Lib.
Cummins, John	Delta—Richmond East	British Columbia	CPC
Cuzner, Rodger	Cape Breton—Canso	Nova Scotia	Lib.
D'Amours, Jean-Claude	Madawaska—Restigouche	New Brunswick	Lib.
Davidson, Patricia	Sarnia—Lambton	Ontario	CPC
Davies, Libby	Vancouver East	British Columbia	NDP
Day, Hon. Stockwell, Minister of Public Safety	Okanagan—Coquihalla	British Columbia	CPC
DeBellefeuille, Claude	Beauharnois—Salaberry	Québec	BQ

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Del Mastro, Dean	Peterborough	Ontario	CPC
Demers, Nicole	Laval	Québec	BQ
Deschamps, Johanne	Laurentides—Labelle	Québec	BQ
Devolin, Barry	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes— Brock	Ontario	CPC
Dewar, Paul	Ottawa Centre	Ontario	NDP
Dhaliwal, Sukh	Newton—North Delta	British Columbia	Lib.
Dhalla, Ruby	Brampton—Springdale	Ontario	Lib.
Dion, Hon. Stéphane, Leader of the Opposition	Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Québec	Lib.
Dosanjh, Hon. Ujjal	Vancouver South	British Columbia	Lib.
Doyle, Norman	St. John's East	Newfoundland and Labrador	CPC
Dryden, Hon. Ken	York Centre	Ontario	Lib.
Duceppe, Gilles	Laurier—Sainte-Marie	Québec	BQ
Dykstra, Rick	St. Catharines	Ontario	CPC
Easter, Hon. Wayne	Malpeque	Prince Edward Island	Lib.
Emerson, Hon. David, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics	Vancouver Kingsway	British Columbia	CPC
Epp, Ken	Edmonton—Sherwood Park	Alberta	CPC
Eyking, Hon. Mark	Sydney—Victoria	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Faille, Meili	Vaudreuil—Soulanges	Québec	BQ
Fast, Ed	Abbotsford	British Columbia	CPC
Finley, Hon. Diane, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration	Haldimand—Norfolk	Ontario	CPC
Fitzpatrick, Brian	Prince Albert	Saskatchewan	CPC
Flaherty, Hon. Jim, Minister of Finance	Whitby—Oshawa	Ontario	CPC
Fletcher, Steven, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health	Charleswood—St. James— Assiniboia	Manitoba	CPC
Folco, Raymonde	Laval—Les Îles	Québec	Lib.
Freeman, Carole	Châteauguay—Saint-Constant	Québec	BQ
Fry, Hon. Hedy	Vancouver Centre	British Columbia	Lib.
Gagnon, Christiane	Québec	Québec	BQ
Galipeau, Royal, The Acting Speaker	Ottawa—Orléans	Ontario	CPC
Gallant, Cheryl	Renfrew—Nipissing— Pembroke	Ontario	CPC
Gaudet, Roger	Montcalm	Québec	BQ
Gauthier, Michel	Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean	Québec	BQ
Godfrey, Hon. John	Don Valley West	Ontario	Lib.
Godin, Yvon	Acadie—Bathurst	New Brunswick	NDP
Goldring, Peter	Edmonton East	Alberta	CPC
Goodale, Hon. Ralph	Wascana	Saskatchewan	Lib.
Goodyear, Gary	Cambridge	Ontario	CPC
Gourde, Jacques, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources	Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la- Chaudière	Québec	CPC
Graham, Hon. Bill	Toronto Centre	Ontario	Lib.
Gravel, Raymond	Repentigny	Québec	BQ
Grewal, Nina	Fleetwood—Port Kells	British Columbia	CPC
Guarnieri, Hon. Albina	Mississauga East—Cooksville	Ontario	Lib.
Guay, Monique	Rivière-du-Nord	Québec	BQ
Guergis, Hon. Helena, Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport)	Simcoe—Grey	Ontario	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Guimond, Michel	Montmorency—Charlevoix— Haute-Côte-Nord	Québec	BQ
Hanger, Art	Calgary Northeast	Alberta	CPC
Harper, Right Hon. Stephen, Prime Minister	Calgary Southwest	Alberta	CPC
Harris, Richard	Cariboo—Prince George	British Columbia	CPC
Harvey, Luc	Louis-Hébert	Québec	CPC
Hawn, Laurie	Edmonton Centre	Alberta	CPC
Hearn, Hon. Loyola, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans	St. John's South—Mount Pearl Labrador	Newfoundland and Labrador	CPC
Hiebert, Russ, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence	South Surrey—White Rock— Cloverdale	British Columbia	CPC
Hill, Hon. Jay, Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip	Prince George—Peace River	British Columbia	CPC
Hinton, Betty, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs	Kamloops—Thompson— Cariboo	British Columbia	CPC
Holland, Mark	Ajax—Pickering	Ontario	Lib.
Hubbard, Hon. Charles	Miramichi	New Brunswick	Lib.
Ignatieff, Michael	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	Ontario	Lib.
Jaffer, Rahim	Edmonton—Strathcona	Alberta	CPC
Jean, Brian, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities	Fort McMurray—Athabasca	Alberta	CPC
Jennings, Hon. Marlene	Notre-Dame-de-Grâce— Lachine	Québec	Lib.
Julian, Peter	Burnaby—New Westminster	British Columbia	NDP
Kadis, Susan	Thornhill	Ontario	Lib.
Kamp, Randy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans	Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge— Mission	British Columbia	CPC
Karetak-Lindell, Nancy	Nunavut	Nunavut	Lib.
Karygiannis, Hon. Jim	Scarborough—Agincourt	Ontario	Lib.
Keddy, Gerald	South Shore—St. Margaret's	Nova Scotia	CPC
Keeper, Tina	Churchill	Manitoba	Lib.
Kenney, Hon. Jason, Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity)	Calgary Southeast	Alberta	CPC
Khan, Wajid	Mississauga—Streetsville	Ontario	CPC
Komarnicki, Ed, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration	Souris—Moose Mountain	Saskatchewan	CPC
Kotto, Maka	Saint-Lambert	Québec	BQ
Kramp, Daryl	Prince Edward—Hastings	Ontario	CPC
Laforest, Jean-Yves	Saint-Maurice—Champlain	Québec	BQ
Laframboise, Mario	Argenteuil—Papineau— Mirabel	Québec	BQ
Lake, Mike	Edmonton—Mill Woods— Beaumont	Alberta	CPC
Lalonde, Francine	La Pointe-de-l'Île	Québec	BQ
Lauzon, Guy	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Ontario	CPC
Lavallée, Carole	Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert	Québec	BQ
Layton, Hon. Jack	Toronto—Danforth	Ontario	NDP
LeBlanc, Hon. Dominic	Beauséjour	New Brunswick	Lib.
Lee, Derek	Scarborough—Rouge River	Ontario	Lib.
Lemay, Marc	Abitibi—Témiscamingue	Québec	BQ
Lemieux, Pierre	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	Ontario	CPC
Lessard, Yves	Chambly—Borduas	Québec	BQ

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Lévesque, Yvon	Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou	Québec	BQ
Lukiwski, Tom, Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform	Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre	Saskatchewan	CPC
Lunn, Hon. Gary, Minister of Natural Resources	Saanich—Gulf Islands	British Columbia	CPC
Lunney, James	Nanaimo—Alberni	British Columbia	CPC
Lussier, Marcel	Brossard—La Prairie	Québec	BQ
MacAulay, Hon. Lawrence	Cardigan	Prince Edward Island	Lib.
MacKay, Hon. Peter, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency	Central Nova	Nova Scotia	CPC
MacKenzie, Dave, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety	Oxford	Ontario	CPC
Malhi, Hon. Gurbax	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	Ontario	Lib.
Malo, Luc	Verchères—Les Patriotes	Québec	BQ
Maloney, John	Welland	Ontario	Lib.
Manning, Fabian	Avalon	Newfoundland and Labrador	CPC
Mark, Inky	Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette	Manitoba	CPC
Marleau, Hon. Diane	Sudbury	Ontario	Lib.
Marston, Wayne	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek	Ontario	NDP
Martin, Hon. Keith	Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca	British Columbia	Lib.
Martin, Pat	Winnipeg Centre	Manitoba	NDP
Martin, Right Hon. Paul	LaSalle—Émard	Québec	Lib.
Martin, Tony	Sault Ste. Marie	Ontario	NDP
Masse, Brian	Windsor West	Ontario	NDP
Mathysen, Irene	London—Fanshawe	Ontario	NDP
Matthews, Bill	Random—Burin—St. George's	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Mayes, Colin	Okanagan—Shuswap	British Columbia	CPC
McCallum, Hon. John	Markham—Unionville	Ontario	Lib.
McDonough, Alexa	Halifax	Nova Scotia	NDP
McGuinty, David	Ottawa South	Ontario	Lib.
McGuire, Hon. Joe	Egmont	Prince Edward Island	Lib.
McKay, Hon. John	Scarborough—Guildwood	Ontario	Lib.
McTeague, Hon. Dan	Pickering—Scarborough East	Ontario	Lib.
Ménard, Réal	Hochelaga	Québec	BQ
Ménard, Serge	Marc-Aurèle-Fortin	Québec	BQ
Menzies, Ted, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and Minister of International Cooperation	Macleod	Alberta	CPC
Merasty, Gary	Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River	Saskatchewan	Lib.
Merrifield, Rob	Yellowhead	Alberta	CPC
Miller, Larry	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Ontario	CPC
Milliken, Hon. Peter, Speaker	Kingston and the Islands	Ontario	Lib.
Mills, Bob	Red Deer	Alberta	CPC
Minna, Hon. Maria	Beaches—East York	Ontario	Lib.
Moore, James, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics	Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam	British Columbia	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Moore, Rob, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada	Fundy Royal	New Brunswick	CPC
Mourani, Maria	Ahuntsic	Québec	BQ
Murphy, Brian	Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe	New Brunswick	Lib.
Murphy, Hon. Shawn	Charlottetown	Prince Edward Island	Lib.
Nadeau, Richard	Gatineau	Québec	BQ
Nash, Peggy	Parkdale—High Park	Ontario	NDP
Neville, Hon. Anita	Winnipeg South Centre	Manitoba	Lib.
Nicholson, Hon. Rob, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada	Niagara Falls	Ontario	CPC
Norlock, Rick	Northumberland—Quinte West	Ontario	CPC
O'Connor, Hon. Gordon, Minister of National Defence	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	Ontario	CPC
Obhrai, Deepak, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Calgary East	Alberta	CPC
Oda, Hon. Bev, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women	Durham	Ontario	CPC
Ouellet, Christian	Brome—Missisquoi	Québec	BQ
Owen, Hon. Stephen	Vancouver Quadra	British Columbia	Lib.
Pacetti, Massimo	Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel	Québec	Lib.
Pallister, Brian	Portage—Lisgar	Manitoba	CPC
Paquette, Pierre	Joliette	Québec	BQ
Paradis, Hon. Christian, Secretary of State (Agriculture)	Mégantic—L'Érable	Québec	CPC
Patry, Bernard	Pierrefonds—Dollard	Québec	Lib.
Pearson, Glen	London North Centre	Ontario	Lib.
Perron, Gilles-A.	Rivière-des-Mille-Îles	Québec	BQ
Peterson, Hon. Jim	Willowdale	Ontario	Lib.
Petit, Daniel	Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles	Québec	CPC
Picard, Pauline	Drummond	Québec	BQ
Plamondon, Louis	Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour	Québec	BQ
Poilievre, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board	Nepean—Carleton	Ontario	CPC
Prentice, Hon. Jim, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians	Calgary Centre-North	Alberta	CPC
Preston, Joe	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Ontario	CPC
Priddy, Penny	Surrey North	British Columbia	NDP
Proulx, Marcel	Hull—Aylmer	Québec	Lib.
Rajotte, James	Edmonton—Leduc	Alberta	CPC
Ratansi, Yasmin	Don Valley East	Ontario	Lib.
Redman, Hon. Karen	Kitchener Centre	Ontario	Lib.
Regan, Hon. Geoff	Halifax West	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Reid, Scott	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	Ontario	CPC
Richardson, Lee	Calgary Centre	Alberta	CPC
Ritz, Hon. Gerry, Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism)	Battlefords—Lloydminster	Saskatchewan	CPC
Robillard, Hon. Lucienne	Westmount—Ville-Marie	Québec	Lib.
Rodriguez, Pablo	Honoré-Mercier	Québec	Lib.
Rota, Anthony	Nipissing—Timiskaming	Ontario	Lib.
Roy, Jean-Yves	Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia	Québec	BQ

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Russell, Todd	Labrador	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Savage, Michael	Dartmouth—Cole Harbour	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Savoie, Denise	Victoria	British Columbia	NDP
Scarpaleggia, Francis	Lac-Saint-Louis	Québec	Lib.
Scheer, Andrew, The Acting Speaker	Regina—Qu'Appelle	Saskatchewan	CPC
Schellenberger, Gary	Perth—Wellington	Ontario	CPC
Scott, Hon. Andy	Fredericton	New Brunswick	Lib.
Sgro, Hon. Judy	York West	Ontario	Lib.
ShIPLEY, Bev	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Ontario	CPC
Siksay, Bill	Burnaby—Douglas	British Columbia	NDP
Silva, Mario	Davenport	Ontario	Lib.
Simard, Hon. Raymond	Saint Boniface	Manitoba	Lib.
Simms, Scott	Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Skelton, Hon. Carol, Minister of National Revenue	Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar	Saskatchewan	CPC
Smith, Joy	Kildonan—St. Paul	Manitoba	CPC
Solberg, Hon. Monte, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development	Medicine Hat	Alberta	CPC
Sorenson, Kevin	Crowfoot	Alberta	CPC
St-Cyr, Thierry	Jeanne-Le Ber	Québec	BQ
St-Hilaire, Caroline	Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher	Québec	BQ
St. Amand, Lloyd	Brant	Ontario	Lib.
St. Denis, Brent	Algoma—Manitoulin—KapusKasing	Ontario	Lib.
Stanton, Bruce	Simcoe North	Ontario	CPC
Steckle, Paul	Huron—Bruce	Ontario	Lib.
Stoffer, Peter	Sackville—Eastern Shore	Nova Scotia	NDP
Storseth, Brian	Westlock—St. Paul	Alberta	CPC
Strahl, Hon. Chuck, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board	Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon	British Columbia	CPC
Stronach, Hon. Belinda	Newmarket—Aurora	Ontario	Lib.
Sweet, David	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale	Ontario	CPC
Szabo, Paul	Mississauga South	Ontario	Lib.
Telegdi, Hon. Andrew	Kitchener—Waterloo	Ontario	Lib.
Temelkovski, Lui	Oak Ridges—Markham	Ontario	Lib.
Thibault, Louise	Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques	Québec	BQ
Thibault, Hon. Robert	West Nova	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Thompson, Hon. Greg, Minister of Veterans Affairs	New Brunswick Southwest	New Brunswick	CPC
Thompson, Myron	Wild Rose	Alberta	CPC
Tilson, David	Dufferin—Caledon	Ontario	CPC
Toews, Hon. Vic, President of the Treasury Board	Provencher	Manitoba	CPC
Tonks, Alan	York South—Weston	Ontario	Lib.
Trost, Bradley	Saskatoon—Humboldt	Saskatchewan	CPC
Turner, Hon. Garth	Halton	Ontario	Lib.
Tweed, Merv	Brandon—Souris	Manitoba	CPC
Valley, Roger	Kenora	Ontario	Lib.
Van Kesteren, Dave	Chatham-Kent—Essex	Ontario	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Van Loan, Hon. Peter, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform	York—Simcoe.....	Ontario	CPC
Vellacott, Maurice	Saskatoon—Wanuskewin.....	Saskatchewan	CPC
Verner, Hon. Josée, Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages	Louis-Saint-Laurent.....	Québec	CPC
Vincent, Robert.....	Shefford	Québec	BQ
Volpe, Hon. Joseph	Eglinton—Lawrence	Ontario	Lib.
Wallace, Mike	Burlington	Ontario	CPC
Wappel, Tom	Scarborough Southwest.....	Ontario	Lib.
Warawa, Mark, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment	Langley	British Columbia	CPC
Warkentin, Chris	Peace River.....	Alberta	CPC
Wasylycia-Leis, Judy	Winnipeg North	Manitoba	NDP
Watson, Jeff	Essex.....	Ontario	CPC
Wilfert, Hon. Bryon.....	Richmond Hill	Ontario	Lib.
Williams, John.....	Edmonton—St. Albert.....	Alberta	CPC
Wilson, Blair	West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country....	British Columbia	Lib.
Wrzesnewskyj, Borys	Etobicoke Centre.....	Ontario	Lib.
Yelich, Lynne, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development.....	Blackstrap	Saskatchewan	CPC
Zed, Paul.....	Saint John	New Brunswick.....	Lib.
VACANCY	Outremont	Québec	
VACANCY	Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.....	Québec	

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BY PROVINCE

First Session—Thirty Nine Parliament

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALBERTA (28)		
Ablonczy, Diane, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance	Calgary—Nose Hill	CPC
Ambrose, Hon. Rona, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Western Economic Diversification	Edmonton—Spruce Grove	CPC
Anders, Rob	Calgary West	CPC
Benoit, Leon	Vegreville—Wainwright	CPC
Calkins, Blaine	Wetaskiwin	CPC
Casson, Rick	Lethbridge	CPC
Epp, Ken	Edmonton—Sherwood Park	CPC
Goldring, Peter	Edmonton East	CPC
Hanger, Art	Calgary Northeast	CPC
Harper, Right Hon. Stephen, Prime Minister	Calgary Southwest	CPC
Hawn, Laurie	Edmonton Centre	CPC
Jaffer, Rahim	Edmonton—Strathcona	CPC
Jean, Brian, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities	Fort McMurray—Athabasca	CPC
Kenney, Hon. Jason, Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity) ...	Calgary Southeast	CPC
Lake, Mike	Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont	CPC
Menzies, Ted, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and Minister of International Cooperation	Macleod	CPC
Merrifield, Rob	Yellowhead	CPC
Mills, Bob	Red Deer	CPC
Obhrai, Deepak, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Calgary East	CPC
Prentice, Hon. Jim, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians	Calgary Centre-North	CPC
Rajotte, James	Edmonton—Leduc	CPC
Richardson, Lee	Calgary Centre	CPC
Solberg, Hon. Monte, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development	Medicine Hat	CPC
Sorenson, Kevin	Crowfoot	CPC
Storseth, Brian	Westlock—St. Paul	CPC
Thompson, Myron	Wild Rose	CPC
Warkentin, Chris	Peace River	CPC
Williams, John	Edmonton—St. Albert	CPC
BRITISH COLUMBIA (36)		
Abbott, Jim, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage	Kootenay—Columbia	CPC
Atamanenko, Alex	British Columbia Southern Interior	NDP
Bell, Catherine	Vancouver Island North	NDP
Bell, Don	North Vancouver	Lib.
Black, Dawn	New Westminster—Coquitlam	NDP
Cannan, Ron	Kelowna—Lake Country	CPC
Chan, Hon. Raymond	Richmond	Lib.
Crowder, Jean	Nanaimo—Cowichan	NDP
Cullen, Nathan	Skeena—Bulkley Valley	NDP
Cummins, John	Delta—Richmond East	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Davies, Libby	Vancouver East	NDP
Day, Hon. Stockwell, Minister of Public Safety	Okanagan—Coquihalla	CPC
Dhaliwal, Sukh	Newton—North Delta	Lib.
Dosanjh, Hon. Ujjal	Vancouver South	Lib.
Emerson, Hon. David, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics	Vancouver Kingsway	CPC
Fast, Ed.	Abbotsford	CPC
Fry, Hon. Hedy	Vancouver Centre	Lib.
Grewal, Nina	Fleetwood—Port Kells	CPC
Harris, Richard	Cariboo—Prince George	CPC
Hiebert, Russ, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence	South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale	CPC
Hill, Hon. Jay, Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip	Prince George—Peace River	CPC
Hinton, Betty, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs	Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo	CPC
Julian, Peter	Burnaby—New Westminster	NDP
Kamp, Randy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans	Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission	CPC
Lunn, Hon. Gary, Minister of Natural Resources	Saanich—Gulf Islands	CPC
Lunney, James	Nanaimo—Alberni	CPC
Martin, Hon. Keith	Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca	Lib.
Mayes, Colin	Okanagan—Shuswap	CPC
Moore, James, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics	Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam	CPC
Owen, Hon. Stephen	Vancouver Quadra	Lib.
Priddy, Penny	Surrey North	NDP
Savoie, Denise	Victoria	NDP
Siksay, Bill	Burnaby—Douglas	NDP
Strahl, Hon. Chuck, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board	Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon	CPC
Warawa, Mark, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment	Langley	CPC
Wilson, Blair	West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country	Lib.
MANITOBA (14)		
Bezan, James	Selkirk—Interlake	CPC
Blaikie, Hon. Bill, The Deputy Speaker	Elmwood—Transcona	NDP
Bruinooge, Rod, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians	Winnipeg South	CPC
Fletcher, Steven, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health	Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia	CPC
Keeper, Tina	Churchill	Lib.
Mark, Inky	Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette	CPC
Martin, Pat	Winnipeg Centre	NDP
Neville, Hon. Anita	Winnipeg South Centre	Lib.
Pallister, Brian	Portage—Lisgar	CPC
Simard, Hon. Raymond	Saint Boniface	Lib.
Smith, Joy	Kildonan—St. Paul	CPC
Toews, Hon. Vic, President of the Treasury Board	Provencher	CPC
Tweed, Merv	Brandon—Souris	CPC
Wasylycia-Leis, Judy	Winnipeg North	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
NEW BRUNSWICK (10)		
Allen, Mike	Tobique—Mactaquac	CPC
D'Amours, Jean-Claude	Madawaska—Restigouche	Lib.
Godin, Yvon	Acadie—Bathurst	NDP
Hubbard, Hon. Charles	Miramichi	Lib.
LeBlanc, Hon. Dominic	Beauséjour	Lib.
Moore, Rob, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada	Fundy Royal	CPC
Murphy, Brian	Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe	Lib.
Scott, Hon. Andy	Fredericton	Lib.
Thompson, Hon. Greg, Minister of Veterans Affairs	New Brunswick Southwest	CPC
Zed, Paul	Saint John	Lib.
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR (7)		
Byrne, Hon. Gerry	Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte	Lib.
Doyle, Norman	St. John's East	CPC
Hearn, Hon. Loyola, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans	St. John's South—Mount Pearl	CPC
Manning, Fabian	Avalon	CPC
Matthews, Bill	Random—Burin—St. George's	Lib.
Russell, Todd	Labrador	Lib.
Simms, Scott	Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor	Lib.
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (1)		
Bevington, Dennis	Western Arctic	NDP
NOVA SCOTIA (11)		
Brison, Hon. Scott	Kings—Hants	Lib.
Casey, Bill	Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley	CPC
Cuzner, Rodger	Cape Breton—Canso	Lib.
Eyking, Hon. Mark	Sydney—Victoria	Lib.
Keddy, Gerald	South Shore—St. Margaret's	CPC
MacKay, Hon. Peter, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency	Central Nova	CPC
McDonough, Alexa	Halifax	NDP
Regan, Hon. Geoff	Halifax West	Lib.
Savage, Michael	Dartmouth—Cole Harbour	Lib.
Stoffer, Peter	Sackville—Eastern Shore	NDP
Thibault, Hon. Robert	West Nova	Lib.
NUNAVUT (1)		
Karetak-Lindell, Nancy	Nunavut	Lib.
ONTARIO (106)		
Albrecht, Harold	Kitchener—Conestoga	CPC
Alghabra, Omar	Mississauga—Erindale	Lib.
Allison, Dean	Niagara West—Glanbrook	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Angus, Charlie	Timmins—James Bay	NDP
Bains, Hon. Navdeep	Mississauga—Brampton South	Lib.
Baird, Hon. John, Minister of the Environment	Ottawa West—Nepean	CPC
Barnes, Hon. Sue	London West	Lib.
Beaumier, Colleen	Brampton West	Lib.
Bélanger, Hon. Mauril	Ottawa—Vanier	Lib.
Bennett, Hon. Carolyn	St. Paul's	Lib.
Bevilacqua, Hon. Maurizio	Vaughan	Lib.
Bonin, Raymond	Nickel Belt	Lib.
Boshcoff, Ken	Thunder Bay—Rainy River	Lib.
Brown, Bonnie	Oakville	Lib.
Brown, Gord	Leeds—Grenville	CPC
Brown, Patrick	Barrie	CPC
Cannis, John	Scarborough Centre	Lib.
Carrie, Colin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry	Oshawa	CPC
Chamberlain, Hon. Brenda	Guelph	Lib.
Charlton, Chris	Hamilton Mountain	NDP
Chong, Hon. Michael	Wellington—Halton Hills	CPC
Chow, Olivia	Trinity—Spadina	NDP
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre	NDP
Clement, Hon. Tony, Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Parry Sound—Muskoka	CPC
Comartin, Joe	Windsor—Tecumseh	NDP
Comuzzi, Hon. Joe	Thunder Bay—Superior North	Ind.
Cullen, Hon. Roy	Etobicoke North	Lib.
Davidson, Patricia	Sarnia—Lambton	CPC
Del Mastro, Dean	Peterborough	CPC
Devolin, Barry	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	CPC
Dewar, Paul	Ottawa Centre	NDP
Dhalla, Ruby	Brampton—Springdale	Lib.
Dryden, Hon. Ken	York Centre	Lib.
Dykstra, Rick	St. Catharines	CPC
Finley, Hon. Diane, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration	Haldimand—Norfolk	CPC
Flaherty, Hon. Jim, Minister of Finance	Whitby—Oshawa	CPC
Galipeau, Royal, The Acting Speaker	Ottawa—Orléans	CPC
Gallant, Cheryl	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	CPC
Godfrey, Hon. John	Don Valley West	Lib.
Goodyear, Gary	Cambridge	CPC
Graham, Hon. Bill	Toronto Centre	Lib.
Guarnieri, Hon. Albina	Mississauga East—Cooksville	Lib.
Guergis, Hon. Helena, Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport)	Simcoe—Grey	CPC
Holland, Mark	Ajax—Pickering	Lib.
Ignatieff, Michael	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	Lib.
Kadis, Susan	Thornhill	Lib.
Karygiannis, Hon. Jim	Scarborough—Agincourt	Lib.
Khan, Wajid	Mississauga—Streetsville	CPC
Kramp, Daryl	Prince Edward—Hastings	CPC
Lauzon, Guy	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	CPC
Layton, Hon. Jack	Toronto—Danforth	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Lee, Derek	Scarborough—Rouge River	Lib.
Lemieux, Pierre	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	CPC
MacKenzie, Dave, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety	Oxford	CPC
Malhi, Hon. Gurbax	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	Lib.
Maloney, John	Welland	Lib.
Marleau, Hon. Diane	Sudbury	Lib.
Marston, Wayne	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek	NDP
Martin, Tony	Sault Ste. Marie	NDP
Masse, Brian	Windsor West	NDP
Mathyssen, Irene	London—Fanshawe	NDP
McCallum, Hon. John	Markham—Unionville	Lib.
McGuinty, David	Ottawa South	Lib.
McKay, Hon. John	Scarborough—Guildwood	Lib.
McTeague, Hon. Dan	Pickering—Scarborough East	Lib.
Miller, Larry	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	CPC
Milliken, Hon. Peter, Speaker	Kingston and the Islands	Lib.
Minna, Hon. Maria	Beaches—East York	Lib.
Nash, Peggy	Parkdale—High Park	NDP
Nicholson, Hon. Rob, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada	Niagara Falls	CPC
Norlock, Rick	Northumberland—Quinte West	CPC
O'Connor, Hon. Gordon, Minister of National Defence	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	CPC
Oda, Hon. Bev, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women	Durham	CPC
Pearson, Glen	London North Centre	Lib.
Peterson, Hon. Jim	Willowdale	Lib.
Poillievre, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board	Nepean—Carleton	CPC
Preston, Joe	Elgin—Middlesex—London	CPC
Ratansi, Yasmin	Don Valley East	Lib.
Redman, Hon. Karen	Kitchener Centre	Lib.
Reid, Scott	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	CPC
Rota, Anthony	Nipissing—Timiskaming	Lib.
Schellenberger, Gary	Perth—Wellington	CPC
Sgro, Hon. Judy	York West	Lib.
Shiple, Bev	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	CPC
Silva, Mario	Davenport	Lib.
St. Amand, Lloyd	Brant	Lib.
St. Denis, Brent	Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing	Lib.
Stanton, Bruce	Simcoe North	CPC
Steckle, Paul	Huron—Bruce	Lib.
Stronach, Hon. Belinda	Newmarket—Aurora	Lib.
Sweet, David	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale	CPC
Szabo, Paul	Mississauga South	Lib.
Telegdi, Hon. Andrew	Kitchener—Waterloo	Lib.
Temelkovski, Lui	Oak Ridges—Markham	Lib.
Tilson, David	Dufferin—Caledon	CPC
Tonks, Alan	York South—Weston	Lib.
Turner, Hon. Garth	Halton	Lib.
Valley, Roger	Kenora	Lib.
Van Kesteren, Dave	Chatham-Kent—Essex	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Van Loan, Hon. Peter, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform.....	York—Simcoe.....	CPC
Volpe, Hon. Joseph.....	Eglinton—Lawrence.....	Lib.
Wallace, Mike.....	Burlington.....	CPC
Wappel, Tom.....	Scarborough Southwest.....	Lib.
Watson, Jeff.....	Essex.....	CPC
Wilfert, Hon. Bryon.....	Richmond Hill.....	Lib.
Wrzesnewskyj, Borys.....	Etobicoke Centre.....	Lib.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND (4)

Easter, Hon. Wayne.....	Malpeque.....	Lib.
MacAulay, Hon. Lawrence.....	Cardigan.....	Lib.
McGuire, Hon. Joe.....	Egmont.....	Lib.
Murphy, Hon. Shawn.....	Charlottetown.....	Lib.

QUÉBEC (73)

André, Guy.....	Berthier—Maskinongé.....	BQ
Arthur, André.....	Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.....	Ind.
Asselin, Gérard.....	Manicouagan.....	BQ
Bachand, Claude.....	Saint-Jean.....	BQ
Barbot, Vivian.....	Papineau.....	BQ
Bellavance, André.....	Richmond—Arthabaska.....	BQ
Bernier, Hon. Maxime, Minister of Industry.....	Beauce.....	CPC
Bigras, Bernard.....	Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.....	BQ
Blackburn, Hon. Jean-Pierre, Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec.....	Jonquière—Alma.....	CPC
Blais, Raynald.....	Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.....	BQ
Blaney, Steven.....	Lévis—Bellechasse.....	CPC
Bonsant, France.....	Compton—Stanstead.....	BQ
Bouchard, Robert.....	Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.....	BQ
Boucher, Sylvie, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages.....	Beauport—Limoilou.....	CPC
Bourgeois, Diane.....	Terrebonne—Blainville.....	BQ
Brunelle, Paule.....	Trois-Rivières.....	BQ
Cannon, Hon. Lawrence, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities....	Pontiac.....	CPC
Cardin, Serge.....	Sherbrooke.....	BQ
Carrier, Robert.....	Alfred-Pellan.....	BQ
Coderre, Hon. Denis.....	Bourassa.....	Lib.
Cotler, Hon. Irwin.....	Mount Royal.....	Lib.
Crête, Paul.....	Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska— Rivière-du-Loup.....	BQ
DeBellefeuille, Claude.....	Beauharnois—Salaberry.....	BQ
Demers, Nicole.....	Laval.....	BQ
Deschamps, Johanne.....	Laurentides—Labelle.....	BQ
Dion, Hon. Stéphane, Leader of the Opposition.....	Saint-Laurent—Cartierville.....	Lib.
Duceppe, Gilles.....	Laurier—Sainte-Marie.....	BQ
Faille, Meili.....	Vaudreuil—Soulanges.....	BQ
Folco, Raymonde.....	Laval—Les Îles.....	Lib.
Freeman, Carole.....	Châteauguay—Saint-Constant.....	BQ
Gagnon, Christiane.....	Québec.....	BQ

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Gaudet, Roger	Montcalm	BQ
Gauthier, Michel	Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean	BQ
Gourde, Jacques, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources	Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière	CPC
Gravel, Raymond	Repentigny	BQ
Guay, Monique	Rivière-du-Nord	BQ
Guimond, Michel	Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord	BQ
Harvey, Luc	Louis-Hébert	CPC
Jennings, Hon. Marlene	Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine	Lib.
Kotto, Maka	Saint-Lambert	BQ
Laforest, Jean-Yves	Saint-Maurice—Champlain	BQ
Laframboise, Mario	Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel	BQ
Lalonde, Francine	La Pointe-de-l'Île	BQ
Lavallée, Carole	Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert	BQ
Lemay, Marc	Abitibi—Témiscamingue	BQ
Lessard, Yves	Chambly—Borduas	BQ
Lévesque, Yvon	Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou	BQ
Lussier, Marcel	Brossard—La Prairie	BQ
Malo, Luc	Verchères—Les Patriotes	BQ
Martin, Right Hon. Paul	LaSalle—Émard	Lib.
Ménard, Réal	Hochelaga	BQ
Ménard, Serge	Marc-Aurèle-Fortin	BQ
Mourani, Maria	Ahuntsic	BQ
Nadeau, Richard	Gatineau	BQ
Ouellet, Christian	Brome—Missisquoi	BQ
Pacetti, Massimo	Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel	Lib.
Paquette, Pierre	Joliette	BQ
Paradis, Hon. Christian, Secretary of State (Agriculture)	Mégantic—L'Érable	CPC
Patry, Bernard	Pierrefonds—Dollard	Lib.
Perron, Gilles-A.	Rivière-des-Mille-Îles	BQ
Petit, Daniel	Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles	CPC
Picard, Pauline	Drummond	BQ
Plamondon, Louis	Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour	BQ
Proulx, Marcel	Hull—Aylmer	Lib.
Robillard, Hon. Lucienne	Westmount—Ville-Marie	Lib.
Rodriguez, Pablo	Honoré-Mercier	Lib.
Roy, Jean-Yves	Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia	BQ
Scarpaleggia, Francis	Lac-Saint-Louis	Lib.
St-Cyr, Thierry	Jeanne-Le Ber	BQ
St-Hilaire, Caroline	Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher	BQ
Thibault, Louise	Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques	BQ
Verner, Hon. Josée, Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages	Louis-Saint-Laurent	CPC
Vincent, Robert	Shefford	BQ
VACANCY	Outremont	
VACANCY	Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot	

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
SASKATCHEWAN (14)		
Anderson, David, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board	Cypress Hills—Grasslands	CPC
Batters, Dave.....	Palliser	CPC
Breitkreuz, Garry	Yorkton—Melville	CPC
Fitzpatrick, Brian	Prince Albert	CPC
Goodale, Hon. Ralph	Wascana	Lib.
Komarnicki, Ed, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration	Souris—Moose Mountain	CPC
Lukiwski, Tom, Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform	Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre	CPC
Merasty, Gary	Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River	Lib.
Ritz, Hon. Gerry, Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism).....	Battlefords—Lloydminster	CPC
Scheer, Andrew, The Acting Speaker	Regina—Qu'Appelle	CPC
Skelton, Hon. Carol, Minister of National Revenue	Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar	CPC
Trost, Bradley	Saskatoon—Humboldt	CPC
Vellacott, Maurice	Saskatoon—Wanuskewin	CPC
Yelich, Lynne, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development	Blackstrap	CPC
YUKON (1)		
Bagnell, Hon. Larry	Yukon	Lib.

LIST OF STANDING AND SUB-COMMITTEES

(As of March 23, 2007 — 1st Session, 39th Parliament)

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Mike Allen	Rick Dykstra	Daryl Kramp	Lee Richardson
Dean Allison	Ken Epp	Mike Lake	Gerry Ritz
Rob Anders	Ed Fast	Guy Lauzon	Gary Schellenberger
David Anderson	Brian Fitzpatrick	Pierre Lemieux	Bev Shipley
Charlie Angus	Steven Fletcher	Tom Lukiwski	Joy Smith
Gérard Asselin	Cheryl Gallant	James Lunney	Kevin Sorenson
Dave Batters	Yvon Godin	Dave MacKenzie	Lloyd St. Amand
Leon Benoit	Peter Goldring	Fabian Manning	Brent St. Denis
Dennis Bevington	Gary Goodyear	Pat Martin	Bruce Stanton
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Gord Brown	Art Hanger	Rob Merrifield	Bradley Trost
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Blaine Calkins	Laurie Hawn	James Moore	Roger Valley
Ron Cannan	Russ Hiebert	Rob Moore	Dave Van Kesteren
Colin Carrie	Jay Hill	Rick Norlock	Peter Van Loan
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Dean Del Mastro	Tina Keeper	Joe Preston	Lynne Yelich

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Chair: James Bezan

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Vice-Chairs:

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 Ed Komarnicki

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ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Vice-Chairs:Bernard Bigras
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Nathan Cullen
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Francis ScarpaleggiaMaurice Vellacott
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Mr. Tom Lukiwski	to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform

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Friday, March 23, 2007

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