



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 142 • NUMBER 088 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, May 5, 2008

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 5, 2008

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1105)
[English]

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

The House resumed from April 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-517, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (mandatory labelling for genetically modified foods), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to rise in debate and add my voice on behalf of the people of Yellowhead in regard to this private member's bill, Bill C-517.

I have to qualify my remarks prior to proceeding. I have worked with genetically modified foods. I have farmed all my life. I have also worked with conventionally grown crops and have a background in understanding crop development, how species grow, and what benefits or risks may exist with regard to genetically modified foods, as I have had the experience of growing them for several years.

On first looking at this bill, the question has to be asked: what is the problem with labelling the food that is grown and products that are on our shelves in Canada? My argument is that whatever label goes on those products has to be accurate. It cannot be misleading. It must inform the consumer in Canada as to exactly what they are eating and the risks that may or may not be associated with foods.

This is where I would like to start my remarks, because Canada has some of the very best foods in the world. Canadians know that, but they need to be reminded, and I am reminding them here and now that we have some of the safest and best quality food products in the world. That is important, because so many in the population now do not grow their own foods. That generational shift has happened over the last couple of generations in Canada and around the world.

Therefore, it is more important now than ever before that the safety measures are in place to ensure that safety is never compromised. Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection

Agency together have the mandate to make sure the products on our shelves are as safe as they can possibly be.

The OECD nations, as well as the World Health Organization and the FAO of the UN, all have worked together on genetically modified foods to make sure there are standards and an agreement not only in Canada but around the world and across many jurisdictions to make sure these products are safe.

The argument is this. If there is any health risk at all with genetically modified foods, we should not just label them but eliminate them. If there is not a risk, we should accept them and use them as an advantage for our crops and foods so that we provide them not only for Canadians but our trading partners.

It is also important to know that when a genetically modified food is put on our shelves or examined by either Health Canada or the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, there is an extensive seven year process of analyzing, assessing and determining whether the product meets the safety standards in Canada. It is very important to understand that.

Some labelling of our food is very important. We fully recognize that when it comes to allergens. Some foods contain allergens and it is important to label them because they can cause serious health risks for consumers. We make sure those allergenic foods are labelled. It is very important to do so.

With what we are seeing with genetically modified foods development in Canada and around the world, it is crucial that we understand the risks and perhaps the benefits, because if we do not understand them, then we are really not fully understanding as consumers what we are trying to do.

My fear is that if we put a label on genetically modified foods the electorate would not quite understand what it means. In fact, I would suggest that there is a real strong debate, both in this room by many members of Parliament and by members of the public, as to what is a genetically modified food. Is it just a food that has been developed by taking better foods and the best of generation after generation to enhance the performance of that commodity? That is one way of doing it.

When a food is genetically modified, we can be looking for dealing with a pesticide that is much safer and easier to use. One way of genetically modifying some of the canolas that we have been working with is to spray a light amount of pesticide on them. Those plants that survive are bred to one another so that eventually a product is developed that is resistant to that herbicide or pesticide.

Private Members' Business

That is one way of doing it. We have seen some tremendous advancements in some of the canola products that we grow in Canada. In fact, canola is a Canadian product, and that is why I refer to it. It is our own invention, which has provided a tremendous product. It is one of the lowest saturated fat food products on the planet. Compared to corn, which is about 20% saturated fats, soy, which is about 15%, and palm oil, which is about 50%, canola is only 7%. It is a tremendous alternative to some foods we have.

While we are looking at labelling, I note that there is a massive debate going on in the House and across Canada as to whether we should get rid of trans fats. A perfect alternative to trans fats is to move to non-hydrogenated canola oil, which is 7% saturated fat rather than 50%.

As we move away from trans fats, we are looking for options that will be healthier for the population. I say that in the context of why it is so important that we label. We have moved to labelling on trans fats. Why? Because trans fats are not healthy and there is scientific evidence that they should not be in the marketplace. The food industry is checking itself by making sure the consumer is not having an overabundance of trans fats. We have moved so that at least 40% and probably closer to 50% of the trans fats are eliminated from our diet.

Genetically modified foods are different from that. After 14 years or more of those products being on our shelves, and after 20 years or more of genetically modified foods being in our products, there has yet to be scientific research that shows those novel foods are less safe than the conventional ones. In fact, the last study that I saw was out of Europe. Europe has not embraced genetically modified foods, although France is now starting to flirt with using genetically modified corn and so on, so it is progressing. To date, though, I would say that broadly the continent has said no, that it will shy away from genetically modified foods.

However, this study in Europe took place over 15 years for 400 different genetically modified products. The final analysis showed that the genetically modified food was healthier than the conventional foods, because much less pesticide was used. In the long run, the product was much safer as far as the health of the individual was concerned.

I am concerned as a farmer and as a Canadian about the amount of pesticides we use. When we use a genetically modified food we are using the highest of technology as far as the new pesticide products are concerned. There are virtually zero residuals. Some of the pesticides that I used to use on the farm had seven-year residuals. They would stay in the soil for seven years before they would break down. Some of the new ones now are neutralized on contact. There have been tremendous advancements in the safety of the technology of the pesticides that we use today compared to what has been used in the past.

Why is that important? Because this is not only about the safety of food. It is about the environment. If I have a concern about genetically modified foods, it does not lie in the safety of the food but in the environment. It is about making sure that we are not creating a "super plant" that could get away from us.

There are 10 groups of pesticides that we use. On the farm, we start by using one group. Then we get some resistance and a mutation in the plants and we have to go to a different group of pesticides to be able to counter that. Therefore, we have to make sure that the balance is there, that we do not grow a super plant that creates a problem in the environment and causes tremendous havoc in the agriculture community.

I am a little concerned about that with genetically modified foods, but I am also very confident that Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency are watching that very closely. To date I have not seen a significant problem on that side of it. One of the reasons is that the technology has allowed for a terminator gene to be put in so that the new generation of those seeds is not allowed to reproduce and cause that kind of problem.

I said earlier that it is important to have truth in labelling. We must realize that 75% of the processed food on the shelves in Canada contains some degree of genetically modified foods or novelty foods. Therefore, if we are concerned about eating genetically modified foods, then there should be truth in labelling.

● (1110)

The only reality and truth that we could find in labelling would be to use what is a growing industry, which is organic foods. Organic foods not only have virtually no genetically modified foods in them, but they have zero pesticides. The option is there for the consumer.

However, if we were to put a label of genetically modified foods on every product in Canada, we would be misleading the consumer. We would be saying to the consumer that we are a little concerned about genetically modified foods or we would not be putting this on a label, and that the foods do not meet all the safety standards, which they do.

I am all for truth and I am all for more information for the consumer, but it has to be real information. This piece of legislation, although well intended, is going in the wrong direction, I believe, because it makes this compulsory. I believe we need to make sure we have the options for the consumer. If consumers are nervous about genetically modified foods, they can go to organic foods. If not, then leave it the way it is.

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to participate today in the debate on Bill C-517, introduced by the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. This bill amends the Food and Drugs Act to make the Minister of Health responsible for establishing that a food or one or more of its components has been genetically modified, and for preparing a list of all such foods for anyone who requests it, because the public must know.

Private Members' Business

As the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles said when he introduced his bill, this is not a new bill, since a few years ago, two other colleagues, including one from the official opposition, were already concerned about the mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods and organisms, commonly known as GMOs. Since 2001, Ontario has been calling for labelling; British Columbia and Quebec are calling for it as well.

The main purpose of Bill C-517 is to inform consumers about what they are eating, and to let them choose whether or not to eat genetically modified foods or food products. Therein lies the challenge. This is not about putting genetically modified foods or food products on trial; this is about the precautionary principle and fundamental information, and about protecting the consumer from any unknown risks or potential effects these types of foods could have on a person's health. As legislators, this is our duty.

This is about ensuring that consumers are safe, by giving them the opportunity to look at the nutritional information on labels of foods on the market, and to make an informed decision.

[English]

Genetically modified organisms, GMOs, could impact Canadians' health. We do not know today what could be the effect of GMOs, in the short term or the long term, on people's health and on the environment. Some scientists say that biotechnologically derived foods create or enhance diseases such as malaria, for example. Therefore, it is our responsibility as legislators to make sure that consumers have proper information on the food they buy and eat.

In Canada, there are already about 50 genetically modified products on the market. These have been approved by the government and can be consumed on their own or can be used to produce another food. We must also address the issue of the percentage of GMOs in the food and determine which level would require mandatory labelling.

In the European Union, for instance, traces of GMOs do not require mandatory labelling if they do not contain more than the threshold of 0.9% and only if their presence in the food is involuntary or accidental and technically inevitable.

[Translation]

This issue, like all environmental issues, does not concern just Canada, but the entire planet. I would like to point out that the European Union, which has ratified the March 2006 Cartagena protocol, already has mandatory labelling regulations.

In fact, the European Union has incorporated the Cartagena protocol, which came out of the meeting held from March 13 to 17, 2006, into its legislation. Signatories to the protocol commit to meeting a series of requirements pertaining to the international trade in GMOs intended for human or animal consumption.

Unfortunately, as our colleague proved a few minutes ago, the Conservative government still does not seem ready to take the necessary steps to make labelling mandatory for genetically modified foods or food products. On the contrary, the Conservative government continues to advocate voluntary labelling, which has been a complete failure because it has been left entirely in the hands of the agriculture and agri-food industries.

Proof of the government's bad faith can be found in an article that appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* on April 4. The newspaper reports that Canada is opposed to the mandatory labelling recommended by the WHO, the World Health Organization, to inform consumers about the quantity of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and added sugars in modified foods.

The Codex committee on mandatory labelling, which was put in place by the WHO to develop international codes of practice and implement the WHO's food standards program, met at the end of April.

The members of the Canadian delegation, headed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, stated their position, which unfortunately is that Canada will not support the amendment put forward by the WHO that would encourage national governments and give them more power to require agri-food industries to reveal the percentage of ingredients that could pose a risk to human health in modified foods. Bill Jeffery, national coordinator of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, stated that Canada's position is indefensible.

The objective of the Cartagena protocol is to help regulate the transboundary movement, transfer, handling and use of any GMO that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and pose risks to human health.

The protocol provides that international shipments of GMOs must be accompanied by documentation that clearly indicates the exact identity of the GMOs concerned. If the exact identity is not known, this documentation must clearly indicate "may contain GMOs".

This protocol affirms the precautionary principle, because it states the following:

Lack of scientific certainty due to insufficient relevant scientific information and knowledge regarding the extent of the potential adverse effects of a living [genetically] modified organism on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in the party of import, taking also into account risks to human health, shall not prevent that party [that is, the importing state] from taking a decision, as appropriate, with regard to the import of the living modified organism in question ... in order to avoid or minimize such potential adverse effects.

• (1120)

[English]

The European Union's policy has two goals: first, to inform consumers, through labelling, about genetically modified organisms; and, second, to create a safety net due to the traceability of the GMO at every step of the manufacture and at the time the product is put on the marketplace.

[Translation]

The operative word in the European regulations is "traceability", that is, the ability to track GMOs and products made from GMOs at all stages of their marketing, throughout the production and distribution chain.

Traceability of GMOs allows the monitoring and checking of information given on labels, the monitoring of effects on the environment and the withdrawal of GMOs that are potentially dangerous for human or animal health.

Private Members' Business

In closing, some farm organizations claim that Bill C-517 will not improve food safety and will not provide increased consumer choice, and that it will be enough for consumers to rely on foods containing the Canadian organic label to ensure that the foods they buy do not contain genetically modified ingredients.

However, we must ensure that the so-called organic label is properly certified by an independent, authorized organization that guarantees that the food is 100% organic. The fact is, these days, we are seeing a proliferation of foods labelled as organic that contain very little or no organic ingredients.

• (1125)

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today to this important legislation.

I will begin my comments by noting that Bill C-517 is identical to Bill C-456 and Bill C-410. Bill C-456 was tabled by my colleague, our agricultural critic from B.C., and Bill C-410 was tabled by my colleague from Winnipeg.

I think the reason people are concerned about this issue, an issue with which our party has been seized and which has been our party's policy for a long time, is essentially from many points of view but it comes down to the right to know. In a democracy, it is extremely important to have transparency.

In terms of food safety, which has been an extremely important issue to Canadians and to people around the world recently because of many of the concerns around food safety, one of the things we need to invoke, as was mentioned earlier by another member, is the precautionary principle.

The precautionary principle, as it relates to GM, genetically modified foods, is that we have some tracking and predictability and at the end of the day we have not only sufficient information for consumers, but also for farmers, which is important.

We know that recent actions of the EU and other jurisdictions have required that GM be noted on all food products. We need to take that into consideration as to what the government's role is to help farmers, as well as consumers. On this side of the House, we believe, and have believed for quite a while, that requires legislation and, quite frankly, support.

We have seen in the past that large agri-businesses have foisted certain products upon farmers, only to find out that sometimes these seeds during planting drift over to other farmers' fields, corrupting their product and their food. Once that happens, it can corrupt and infect a whole crop when these things are not tracked and traced.

Those stories are well-known. I am sure every member of the House is aware of scenarios where, through no fault of the farmers, they discover that some genetically modified seeds have blown over into their fields when they did not ask for them.

When we look at GM labelling and the importance of the consumers' right to know, it also applies to farmers.

When we look at the peer review on this, the independent testing of the environmental and health impacts of growing and eating GM food, it is important to apply the precautionary principle.

I would submit that if we look into policies of the government, certainly of Environment Canada which claims to invoke the precautionary principle, in rhetoric certainly, but we want to ensure it does that in practice.

What are some of the potential adverse effects of GM food consumption? They have to be taken into consideration. The jury is not out. The studies need to be done. Some government members in the House have posited the benefits of it. I have mentioned some of the concerns that have affected farmers. The EU has suggested that GM foods need to be labelled and that there needs to be a clear and transparent process around that. There is the market share for Canadians and for Canadian farmers, which is another reason.

I should note that Canadian companies like McCain have successfully removed GM ingredients in their potatoes, in this case. They were responding to market pressures. Let us not say that it cannot be done. It can be done in terms of tracking and, in this case, removing. However, what we believe must be done without compromise is to bring in the labelling.

I am sure members will be interested to note that the biosafety protocol for countries like Canada will soon require that we supply, as an exporter of GM foods, detailed information on GM products. These products are exported to about 141 countries around the world. It is not only the EU.

• (1130)

Mandatory GM labelling would help Canada and its farmers to continue to have access to the markets. It is a right to know for citizens and consumers, and to help farmers gain access to markets. It is something to make sure that Canada is in line with other countries on a multilateral basis.

In Canada there have been many civil society groups and NGOs that have spoken out on this issue, such as the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate, the National Farmers Union and the Rideau Institute. The USC, which has its headquarters in Ottawa, has spoken out very strongly on this issue. I should note that one of the most prominent experts on this issue, Pat Mooney, has actually given advice to various Liberal and Conservative governments. He has been very clear on the concerns that he has about what GM foods do to our food supply and also the sources of seeds for our foods.

All of this should be taken into account. That is why we should be providing this legislation for Canadians, for our farmers, and to bring us up to speed on our international agreements and commitments.

It is also important to note that there are other pieces of legislation which touch on this. I would perhaps declare a conflict of interest here. I have a private member's bill that would not only ask that GM foods be labelled but that we also include meat products and what antibiotics are in the meat products. We want to know what rendered slaughterhouse waste was used and are there hormones in the food. These are the questions that Canadians have.

Private Members' Business

Canadians remember the mad cow crisis and the failure of our food system, notwithstanding the warnings from scientists at Health Canada that rendered feed would corrupt our meat system. Certainly that happened. Two years prior to the mad cow crisis one of our scientists, who blew the whistle, was fired for doing his job. We were told that if we did not keep an eye on rendered feed that was fed our cows that there would be an outbreak of mad cow disease. He told us that two years before the first case was detected. This scientist is still fighting the government in court because of his actions on blowing the whistle.

It is all about time. It is not about waiting any longer. If we are going to be competitive in the world and provide safe foods for our citizens, as well as an advantage in the export market, this is the bare minimum.

A member of the Liberal Party mentioned the issue of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling which has essentially been ignored by the government. This is another indication of the government not wanting to be a relevant actor on the international stage and following multilateral approaches in my opinion.

It is important that Canadians are in line with the international commitments and protocols that exist. The Codex Committee on Food Labelling is asking our government and other governments to bring forward legislation such as Bill C-517. It is another validation by a third party on why the bill should be passed.

I might add that I recently met with a group who is concerned about baby formula and the fact that it does not have sufficient labelling. We know that baby formula companies are going into hospitals and having access to new mothers and providing formula, instead of urging breastfeeding as the best way to feed babies. I thought those days were over. We know that there is not sufficient labelling on that formula.

The bill before us is the bare minimum for the international commitments that Canada has made for food safety for Canadians and for farmers gaining access to international markets. On this side of the House we strongly support the bill. We have supported the bill in the past and we will support it in the future. It is about time that the Conservative government passed this bill.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with great joy that I rise today to speak to Bill C-517, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (mandatory labelling for genetically modified foods).

I would like to begin by thanking my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for introducing this bill. Once again, this shows that the Bloc Québécois is listening to what Quebecers want, because in Quebec, between 80% and 90%—

An hon. member: Ninety-one percent.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Ninety-one percent of Quebecers want mandatory labelling. Though not unanimous, the vast majority of Quebecers want it, so my colleague decided to introduce this critical bill. The purpose of the bill is to set up a transparent food system so that we know where the things we eat, the foods we put on

the table, come from. If genetic modification has taken place, consumers will know about it before making these decisions.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to a colleague who passed away over the weekend, the former member for Davenport, Charles Caccia. He was the environment minister a few years ago. He first came to the House in 1968 and, as an environmental warrior, he spent 36 years in this House trying to convince as many voters as possible that we need to protect the environment. A real fighter, in 2001, he introduced a bill for mandatory labelling. We must not forget that Charles Caccia, who died this past weekend, had been trying since 2001 to convince parliamentarians here to bring in this mandatory system. Unfortunately, the House rejected his bill, 126 votes to 91. This bill thus has a history.

I remember my former colleague, Hélène Alarie, the representative for Louis-Hébert, who was the first to get a motion passed about setting up this regulatory system. Unfortunately, the House of Commons has repeatedly rejected the new standards, which should be mandatory.

What does Bill C-517 set out to do? First, the minister would be responsible for establishing that a food has been genetically modified. Second, the minister would also be responsible for preparing a list. Third, under the legislation, no one would be allowed to sell genetically modified products unless clear information is made available to the consumer indicating that the product or one or more of its components has been genetically modified.

How did we arrive at this legislative measure today? In 2004, the federal government did not pass a mandatory approach, as most Quebecers and Canadians wanted, but a voluntary approach leaving it up to the industry to label genetically modified foods.

What does this voluntary system achieve? Four years later, because of this chance the industry has been given, we cannot identify any genetically modified products on our grocery store shelves. This proves that the federal government's voluntary approach has been a failure across the board.

What were these standards adopted by the Standards Council of Canada all about? The standard was that a product was considered genetically modified if more than 5% of its ingredients were the product of genetic modifications.

• (1140)

The standard is 5%, while Europe has adopted a standard of 0.9%, or close to 1%. Similarly, the Quebec ministry of agriculture, fisheries and agri-food had proposed to the federal government, during consultations on GMO regulations, a standard of about 0.9%, in other words, a standard extremely similar to the European approach.

This 5% safety threshold adopted by the federal government is clearly inadequate for the people of Quebec, the government of Quebec and those who expect more transparency from the federal government.

Private Members' Business

There is something else to consider in the federal government's proposed figure. For products containing 5% genetic modifications or more, the product label would not use the term GMO, as prescribed in the international standard set out in the Codex Alimentarius. Instead, the term GE, or genetically engineered, or GEP, genetically engineered product, should be used. Again, the federal government's approach is nothing less than an attempt to disguise where the products on our shelves truly come from and what they truly contain.

In short, we should first remember that the proposed regulations are voluntary, and therefore implementation is at the discretion of the industry. Second, the term used misleads Canadians. Third, the safety thresholds are too high; Quebec is asking for a lower threshold of almost 1%, like the one adopted by Europe.

As I said, this approach has failed. However, there are precedents. I am thinking of Russia and China, which have already adopted mandatory labelling of GMOs. Why am I bringing up these two precedents? Quite simply because our exports to Asian countries are on the rise. I am thinking of the wheat issue, for example. When the time came to approve Roundup Ready wheat in Canada, the Canadian Wheat Board advised against it because Canadian farmers would lose some of their market share.

Therefore, Canada should follow the move to make the international standard more transparent in order to avoid reducing market share for those goods it sells in Canada and abroad.

This morning, my Conservative colleague told us that a multitude of studies have shown that this does not pose a threat to our health or the environment. However, all these studies were conducted by the industry and the multinational known as Monsanto. The Royal Society of Canada established a few years ago that the only valid studies are independent studies. I invite our colleague, if he believes that this does not affect our health and the environment, to order this government to fund independent studies that will shed light on this issue.

In closing, I would say that this bill is essential because its main purpose is to better inform citizens about the products they eat. I would add that, contrary to what some would have us believe, this bill presents an economic opportunity for Canadian farmers to embrace and join the international movement to make labelling of transgenic products mandatory.

• (1145)

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-517 which seeks to require that all genetically modified food is labelled. As a representative of a riding with thousands of farmers and ranchers, I am opposed to this bill. As chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, I also oppose this bill.

Technically speaking, Bill C-517 provides a much too narrow definition of genetically modified food, narrower than that which already exists in the food and drug regulations. Under the current regulations the term "genetically modified" includes modifications obtained through the use of traditional techniques, such as chemical

mutagenesis and conventional breeding, as well as those obtained from modern biotechnology.

Bill C-517 would create a two-tiered system for GM foods. Depending on the method used in the development of specific foods, foods falling under the new definition would be required to be labelled to indicate the method of production, while others derived from more traditional modification methods, such as mutagenesis, would not be subject to mandatory labelling.

Health Canada regulates GM foods as novel foods. This encompasses foods that may have undergone a significant change in composition or nutritional value as a result of a manufacturing or packaging process. It also encompasses any substance that does not have a history of safe use as a food. Under the current legislation, the novel foods regulations permit Health Canada to assess the safety of all novel foods irrespective of the production method used prior to their sale in Canada.

We have a rigorous process in Canada. For instance, Health Canada must be notified prior to the marketing of any novel food in Canada so that a thorough safety assessment can be performed. The basis of this assessment is a comparison of each novel food with a conventional counterpart and requires a critical evaluation of the scientific information and results of research studies.

The information requirements are comprehensive. They include a complete description of the food product, its intended use, a molecular characterization of any novel traits, biochemical and compositional analysis, not to mention toxicological, nutritional and allergy data, and an estimate of dietary exposure and anticipated use by the average consumer.

The government is committed to sharing information with Canadians on how products of biotechnology are regulated. Health Canada publishes on its website a list of approved novel foods and decision documents which describe how regulatory authorities determine the safety of each new food product and why certain conclusions were reached. Other information, including Health Canada's guidelines for the safety assessment of novel foods, fact sheets, and answers to frequently asked questions are also available.

Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency post information about products that are under review on the CFIA website. This provides the public with an opportunity to provide input on scientific matters relevant to the safety assessment of submissions from certain product developers.

Health Canada's responsibility for food labelling falls within the department's mandate for health and safety issues. As with all foods, special labelling of GM foods is required in cases where potential health and safety concerns, which can be mitigated through labelling, are identified during the product's pre-market safety assessment.

Private Members' Business

In Canada it is not mandatory to identify the method of production, including biotechnology, that is used to develop a food product. Nevertheless, a voluntary method of production labelling is permitted, provided it is truthful, not misleading and in compliance with all domestic regulatory requirements.

These principles are consistent with policy for all foods under the Food and Drugs Act. In general, food products that are demonstrated to be safe and nutritious are treated the same way as their traditional counterparts with regard to labelling requirements.

Related to this is the CFIA's new regulations for organic products. The organic regulations will protect consumers against false organic claims and will govern the use of a new Canada organic logo.

The government is providing a competitive advantage for the Canadian organic sector and protecting consumers. Not only will Canadians be protected against deceptive and misleading claims on organic products, but the organic industry's capacity to respond to international and domestic market opportunities will be strengthened.

The Canada organic logo will be permitted for use only on those food products certified as meeting the revised Canadian standard for organic production and that contain at least 95% organic ingredients. Following a phase-in period, it will be mandatory that all organic products be certified for interprovincial and international trade.

• (1150)

This government has taken further action to make sure that Canadian families can go to the grocery store knowing the food they purchase is safe. The Prime Minister announced a new food and product safety initiative on December 17, 2007 to ensure that we are ready to meet the new challenges of a global market. The government's food safety action plan will enhance the safety and reliability of food and health products by modernizing our system to better protect Canadians in our global environment.

The government is working hard to ensure our food safety system evolves to meet the challenges posed by increased volumes of trade, consumer demands and differing food safety frameworks among countries. We are delivering on our promises with \$113 million provided in budget 2008 for the product and food safety initiative.

This government's approach is threefold. It focuses on managing risk along the food continuum. It prevents problems early on so that quick action can be taken. It no longer waits for threats to emerge before reacting.

As a government we are proud that we have one of the most stringent food safety systems in the world. Our plan recognizes that product safety is in everyone's interest and that everyone—Canadians, industry and government—has a role to play.

In conclusion, Canada's long-standing policy for the labelling of GM foods allows for the provision of information to consumers while avoiding the costs and potential trade implications associated with the implementation of the requirements of Bill C-517. We are taking steps to protect consumers in the marketplace without needlessly damaging the agriculture industry.

As a farmer, I believe that we should let the market dictate how we produce our food. Consumer driven initiatives will essentially dictate to us on how we move forward with our production methods. I believe voluntary labelling of genetically engineered foods is the correct way to move forward on this issue.

On the news we always hear about increasing prices for grain products, particularly the staples of wheat, rice and corn. Everybody keeps talking about a food shortage. We know we are in a tight supply. Now is not the time to start talking about turning back the clock and going back to an organic production system, which would actually short the marketplace and create even more increases in food prices.

Farmers will decide what is the best way to meet this new world demand and allow the consumers to choose what is best for them, whether that is GMO or non-GMO. My father grew organic crops for over 25 years because the market was there for that product. We received a good return on our investment in growing organic crops. We also know there is greater need out there that can only be met through new technology and improvements to our production systems. Farmers should be allowed to adapt those to make the most money they possibly can and feed the world.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member will be interrupted at noon, high noon.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I speak to Bill C-517 with a great deal of concern, because while the intent sounds reasonable, there are other and better ways of addressing the intent of this bill.

The consequences of this bill would impose costs on Canadian consumers, producers and processors, either driving up the costs of food, or driving down producers' returns, or more likely both, and for what gain? This bill would do absolutely nothing for the safety of food and it would not really clarify choice for consumers.

As the member who spoke before me said, there are already regulations coming into effect that can give consumers that clarity of choice. That is the new Canadian certified organic system under the Canada Agricultural Products Act. When these new regulations come into effect on November 14 of this year, consumers can be assured that when they choose products carrying the Canada organic label they are choosing foods that do not contain products of biotechnology. Beyond that, if consumer demand is there, industry can use voluntary labelling—in fact, that was being done in Prince Edward Island with Island natural pork—as long as that labelling is truthful and abides by the laws of the land.

Private Members' Business

The bill, other than to say something is a genetically modified food, which to be honest happens in both natural breeding and scientific means, I think we ought to be blunt about it; it does actually cater to emotion and to people's fears about the unknown, and genetically modified foods are certainly a bit unknown. To be blunt, with this bill there is absolutely no gain in addressing those fears, but there is a tremendous cost. Let me turn to what some of the organizations have said.

The Canadian Seed Trade Association said:

We believe that if enacted, the provisions of this bill could have a very detrimental effect on the ability of our members to continue to deliver innovative products.

The association went on to say, and this is important:

[Our members] support the rigorous system of assessment in Canada, and expend many human and financial resources to participate in it. Biotechnology is likely the most scrutinized of all of the tools we use to bring innovation to agriculture and agri-food. New products derived from biotechnology are subject to the approval of three different government departments working with 5 different pieces of legislation and associated regulations.

It is very concerned. The bottom line is, who will pay these costs? The costs are substantial. Maple Leaf Foods and others in a letter stated:

This Bill will impose hundreds of millions of dollars of unnecessary cost to the agri-food industry without providing any benefit to Canadian consumers.

The fact is producers and consumers will pay the costs of this mandatory labelling legislation. I would say the bill is a bad investment for no gain, other than to play on people's emotions. Let me list the organizations which have said they are strongly opposed to this bill. They are substantial and they represent a lot of investment in this country: CropLife Canada; Food and Consumer Products of Canada; Maple Leaf Foods; Canadian Egg Marketing Agency; Casco; Canadian Seed Trade Association; Canadian Horticulture Council; Quebec's food processors association, CTAC; UPA in Quebec, the major farm organization there; Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers; Food Processors of Canada; Canadian Meat Council; Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities; Canola Council of Canada; Canadian Canola Growers Association, BIOTECANADA, and the CFA.

• (1155)

This is a substantial list of organizations. I underline the fact that these are not just organizations; they are also Canadian consumers who have the same concern about food as others in our society.

Let me turn to a statement that was made by the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. He said:

We need to understand the ethical, moral and environmental implications of the genetically modified foods that we consume, the foods that we put on the table for our friends and family, foods that have been modified at the genetic level.

I agree with that, but the bill would do absolutely nothing to deal with this concern. Others have raised questions about scientists not being able to speak out, and I agree with that fact. I faced that when I fought rBGH, the drug hormone being put into dairy cattle. We managed to get that specific product stopped. Yes, scientists were shut up, but the bill would do nothing to deal with that issue. Therefore, let us concentrate on where the real problem is rather than bring in a bill that requires mandatory labelling, but does nothing about what people perceive the problem to be.

The bill is not about a safety issue and it would do nothing to clarify what is in food. If consumers have a concern about GM foods, they can turn to their organic labelling product. Industry can also use voluntary labelling. Mandatory labelling will be costly, and I outlined many of those costs.

The bottom line is the bill would not do what it is intended to do. Therefore, I believe it should be stopped at this stage and our time should be invested in dealing with the real issues.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am disconcerted to see a scaremonger, such as the one who just spoke, saying such things and frightening the public.

Let us talk about GMOs.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: I was polite, I kept quiet, so I would ask the member to do the same, please.

I am going to speak about GMOs. I have a quotation to read, since I have only five minutes left. I am quoting someone who knows a lot about GMOs:

Frankly, I think there should have been more testing. But the biotechnology companies were not interested—they had invested a lot of money in developing their products.

...

At that time, if you did not blindly accept rapid development in terms of biotechnology and GMOs, you were thought to be a Luddite. I was under a lot of pressure not to overregulate these products.

Who said that? Dan Glickman, the American Secretary of Agriculture under the Clinton administration.

Last week, when we banned baby bottles—small bottles for babies and infants—made of polycarbonate, the member for Mégantic—L'Érable, Secretary of State (Agriculture), said that when it comes to health and the health of our children, no cost is too high.

Seventy per cent of the producers in Quebec's UPA are in favour of labelling. What is more, 91% of Quebecers and 83% of Canadians are in favour of labelling. We are talking about the health and safety of Canadians like you and me. I believe and I hope that the members in this House will remember, before they make a decision, that this could affect their re-election. When 83% of people are in favour, what should we do? We should listen to our constituents and say yes to mandatory labelling for genetically modified foods.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge two 12-year olds, Claire and Norbert, from the Cœur à cœur school in Saint-Eustache, who are firm supporters of mandatory food labelling.

Points of Order

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): It being 12:05 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, May 7, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

* * *

• (1205)

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-5—NUCLEAR LIABILITY AND COMPENSATION ACT

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning the amendments at report stage of Bill C-5, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident. Before you make a ruling on the selection of these amendments for debate, I would like to bring two things to your attention.

First, I point out that the member for Western Arctic is his party's energy critic and was present in committee during consideration of the clauses where report stage amendments had been proposed. He had the opportunity to move all these amendments at committee. When these clauses were debated at committee, he was signed in as a full member of the committee.

Standing Order 76.1(5) states:

The Speaker...will normally only select motions which were not or could not be presented in committee.

Second, I have concerns that some of these amendments would increase the cost to the Crown, and I would like to go through those.

Page 711 of Marleau and Montpetit states:

A royal recommendation not only fixes the allowable charge, but also its objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications. An amendment which either increases the amount of an appropriation, or extends its objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications is inadmissible on the grounds that it infringes on the Crown's financial initiative.

Therefore, I submit that some of the amendments are inconsistent with the royal recommendation that accompanies the bill.

Motion No. 1 proposes to delete clause 21, which limits the liability of an operator to \$650 million. I make the point that a similar motion was ruled out of order at committee. This change would apply to all nuclear operators, including those that are agents of the Crown, such as Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, which are funded by the government through appropriations.

The effect of this motion would increase the costs to the Crown of operating these reactors and therefore would require a royal recommendation. Again, I point out that this was ruled out of order by the Chair at committee. Further clause 26 authorizes the minister to reinsure the risk of operators, which can be funded out of the consolidated revenue fund under clause 27. Therefore, if clause 21 is deleted without the deletion of clause 26, there would be increased liability to the government and that would therefore infringe on the financial initiative of the Crown.

Motion No. 4 would delete subclauses 24(2) to (5). These provisions presently authorize operators to obtain alternate financial security. This change would apply to all nuclear operators, including those that are agents of the Crown such as Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, which are funded by the government through appropriations. The effect of this motion would increase the cost to the Crown of operating these reactors and therefore requires a royal recommendation.

Motion No. 8, as with Motion No. 1, was ruled out of order at committee. It would have the effect of repealing subclause 34(2) of the bill. Clause 34 relates to interim financial assistance that is payable to persons who, in the minister's opinion, have suffered damage as a result of a nuclear incident.

Subsection (2) of this clause states that the maximum amount paid under subsection (1) may not exceed 20% of the difference between: (a) the amount set out in subsection 21(1), which is \$650 million; and (b) the total amounts paid by the operator before the declaration of the governor in council is made to compensate persons for damage arising from the nuclear incident.

A motion to increase the amount from 20% to 40% was defeated at committee on the basis that it would require a royal recommendation. By deleting clause 34(2) the minister could pay 100% of claims before the tribunal would be in a position to adjudicate any such claim for damage suffered as a result of the incident. Again, I point out that a similar motion was ruled out of order at committee.

Motions Nos. 6, 7, 9 and 10 propose to delete clauses of the bill which are designed to ensure the efficient operation of the tribunal established by the bill. For example, Motion No. 9 proposes to delete clause 47, which allows the tribunal to refuse to hear claims which are frivolous and vexatious. We dealt with this at committee where it was defeated. The deletion of these clauses would have the effect of increasing the operating costs to the tribunal and therefore should require a royal recommendation.

Government Orders

In conclusion, I point out, once again, that the member for Western Arctic was part of the committee when it heard much of the subject areas that were dealt with by these amendments. He had the opportunity to make those amendments. It is clear that the motions that would require a royal recommendation cannot be selected for debate at report stage.

• (1210)

The annotated Standing Orders at page 271 state:

Though not mentioned in this section, exception is made for motions requiring a Royal Recommendation, which are inadmissible at committee stage but admissible at report stage. However, if the necessary Royal Recommendation has not been placed on notice by the deadline required in section (3), the motion in question will not be selected.

I therefore submit that these motions should not be selected for debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board.

Are there other submissions on this matter? This submission will be considered before the ruling is made.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA MARINE ACT

The House resumed from April 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Canada Marine Act, the Canada Transportation Act, the Pilotage Act and other Acts in consequence, be read the third time and passed.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-23 today. Before I begin I want to say that our thoughts are with the over 4,000 people who may have died during the tragedy in Burma on the weekend.

On November 16, 2007, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities introduced Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Canada Marine Act, the Canada Transportation Act, the Pilotage Act and other Acts in consequence, in the House of Commons. The bill is very similar in respect to its predecessor, Bill C-61, An Act to amend the Canada Marine Act and other Acts, which was introduced in the House of Commons on June 22, 2005 by the previous Liberal government. The bill died on the order paper with the dissolution of Parliament without having passed first reading.

Just to ensure our critic knows where I stand on this, I am in favour of the bill to modernize and increase the efficiency of our ports. I have a few questions and concerns on certain elements, but they are basically bringing forth the main points that we had in our bill. We are in agreement with the modernization of the ports in this trading world and to do anything that would make it more efficient and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that are so critical to my area in the north.

In 1998, during the Liberal government's term in office, the Canadian Marine Act received royal assent. This was the first comprehensive legislation to govern several aspects of Canada's

marine legislation. In addition, the act allowed for the establishment of Canada Port Authorities, port facilities and continued divestiture of certain harbour beds.

The Canadian Marine Act assisted in the commercialization of the St. Lawrence Seaway and contained provisions for the further commercialization of federal ferry services.

In 2003, the Canadian Marine Act was subject to a legislative review and, since 2003, Transport Canada has carried out a number of studies from which it was able to compile several recommendations to improve the Canadian Marine Act.

Canada's policy framework of 1995 for federal ports focused on the elimination of overcapacity in the new government structure to support a more commercialized system. Global trading patterns have changed in the context in which federal ports operate. Port modernization is required to ensure that ports have the tools needed to compete in a global trading environment and to support the government's new national policy framework for strategic gateways and trade corridors.

The Canada Port Authorities have locations now in St. John's, Belledune, Halifax, Saint John, Sept-Îles, Saguenay, Trois-Rivières, Montreal, Hamilton, Toronto, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Port Alberni, Nanaimo, Prince Rupert and Vancouver which will be amalgamated with the Fraser River and North Fraser.

Some aspects of the bill are administrative and some are more substantive. Certain administrative aspects were made to increase the clarity and consistency between both language versions. One changes the purpose so it would recognize the significance of marine transportation and its contribution to the Canadian economy.

Our party, in developing this act in the first place, is very supportive of this modernization of the ports. In fact, our leader, the Leader of the Opposition, announced before this past Christmas about a number of new ports in Nunavut, small boat harbours, which is very exciting. Unfortunately, the government has only announced one port, which is one commercial harbour in Nunavut, and we would certainly like a lot more small boat harbours in Nunavut.

The government also announced the enhancement of the military harbour but we have not seen much progress on it to date and we certainly would like to see that initiative related to harbours proceed.

• (1215)

During second reading on this bill, I asked questions as we have had problems relating to consultation with many bills in this Parliament. I was happy to find out that stevedores and longshoremen were consulted. The government had to do some research to find that out but I finally got the answer to that question. The opinions of the pilotage associations are very important. I meet with them usually once a year and they have very important considerations. Of course, also the port authorities, which we know had major input into this bill.

The purpose of the bill, over and above the technical amendments I talked about, is to do a number of things. I will talk about each of these things in more detail and maybe some specific elements of the bill on top of that.

First, the bill would modify the port authorities' access to federal funding.

Second, it would add provisions regarding the power of a port authority to borrow money.

Third, it would provide additional regulatory powers to the Governor in Council.

In some things related to the amalgamation of port authorities, the way in which the directors on the boards of the port authorities' would be pointed would facilitate the processes.

The bill adds provisions regarding port amalgamation, which, in the original times, were not needed because there were so few major ports operating. We now have many more ports to accommodate the huge increase in the world shipping trade. I will list them later on in my speech.

The sixth item related to the bill is that it would modify provisions regarding the boards of directors the port authorities.

Finally, it would add a penalty scheme and streamline certain other provisions.

Before I go into each one of those, I want to state that there are 19 Canadian port authorities right now when we are talking about the amendments related to port authorities. These are located in each of the regions in which gateway and corridor initiatives are being started. I will refer to those later on as well.

One of the areas in which I am interested and hope to hear from the government about is the amendment, as of November 2007, that contribution funding for implementation of security enhancements would no longer be available to Canadian port authorities. I wonder why that has been allowed to expire and why something else was not put in place. I know that is the intent of this bill but, as I will talk about later, I do not want it to detract from money that would be available for other security provisions.

I know a bill was put in place to allow security investments in ports, for instance. I also know that the Canadian Fertilizer Institute approached us for a similar program so it could invest in the very expensive security requirements for fertilizers and dangerous chemical items to make it more competitive in the world markets and more competitive for our agricultural markets.

The bill would give ports the ability to use some of their lands for different purposes, not just for the port itself. In general, I am very strongly supportive of this provision for two reasons. The first reason is that there would be no incentive for a port to expand to cover future contingencies. As we have seen, there have been great increases in shipping in the world and yet some of our ports could not keep up and then, all of a sudden, the land is all gone.

• (1220)

When condos, art centres and other big structures are built on waterfront land that should have been reserved for a port, it becomes

Government Orders

very difficult to expropriate them when the land is needed for a port. It would be hard to get public opinion behind it to use that land and it would be very expensive and wasteful.

For long term planning, we need to set aside that land up front, but if it were to be set aside and left vacant, there will be all sorts of public pressure from every group, commercial enterprise, government, other transportation facilities, convention centres and everyone who wants that land for something else.

This bill would allow that land to be used for other purposes and generate revenue for the port authorities, which should be as self-sufficient as possible, of course, until such time as it is needed.

I definitely am in favour of that, with the exception that we must ensure that once again things are not put on the land that would cause the same problem, permanent structures such as condominiums, transportation networks or art centres, something that cannot just be taken down when the land is needed. I think this is a good provision but it needs to be watched carefully to ensure it is used properly.

For Canada, the ports are more important than for many other countries because we are a trading nation. The parliamentary secretary said that in his speech at second reading. In that light, I hope the government will stop closing important consulates around the world because they are just as important for us as a trading nation.

I said earlier that I would talk about the increase in the number of ports and talk about why we need to deal with things like amalgamations in this bill. In British Columbia, where there was originally one major port, it now has one in North Fraser, Vancouver, Prince Rupert, Nanaimo and Port Alberni, all to help the great expansion of trade to Asia. That is why we need coordination, not only with the ports themselves but also with the other types of transportation that feed into the port.

All the investment cannot be in the port land itself, because we also need to invest in the appropriate bridges, roads, parking and customs facilities in a type of corridor strategy. When we did the west coast port corridor we envisioned all of those items. I hope the Conservatives enhance and speed up the investment in that Pacific corridor at the rate that we had envisioned.

A few years ago we missed an opportunity to re-enhance the capacity of the Halifax harbour to handle the giant ships coming into the marketplace. I hope we do not miss that in the future.

When we are talking about the gateways, I want to assure my colleagues in Quebec and Ontario that we are not just talking about the Atlantic and Pacific gateways, which I have mentioned. We also need to ensure there is investment in the St. Lawrence—Great Lakes corridor and the St. Lawrence Seaway. That corridor has good potential because many of those ports would not be in competition with the east or west. They would be taking goods directly inland in a more efficient and economical way. This would help to build efficiencies in Ontario and Quebec in their ports on the Great Lakes and on the St. Lawrence River.

Government Orders

The distance between Montreal and Rotterdam is 5,813 kilometres, while the distance between New York and Rotterdam is 6,154 kilometres. Therefore, there is no reason that we cannot get that faster entry into the heartland of the Americas if we ensure we have just as efficient a system for getting the goods into our ports as opposed to ports like New York.

• (1225)

In spite of increased shipping around the world, Canada's use of that particular route has dropped. The total amount of goods transported via the St. Lawrence dropped from 130 million tonnes in the early 1980s to approximately 100 million tonnes 10 years later, only to have around 105 million tonnes since. Thus, since 1980, the ports on the St. Lawrence have received less merchandise than the 150 million tonnes they received in 2007. It was 25 million tonnes less than what was being transported on the St. Lawrence in the early 1980s.

Over the past 30 years the carriage of goods by ship has grown in the world 600%, while traffic on the St. Lawrence has dropped from 130 million tonnes in the 1980s to the current 105 million tonnes. Even the Mississippi River, which is a competitor to get into the heartland of the St. Lawrence, saw its traffic increase from 450 million tonnes to 700 million tonnes. I want my colleagues in Ontario and Quebec to know we are thinking of them and that our vision of ports includes them in the modernization and investment of their ports.

Those were introductory remarks. I want to now go on to the major components of the bill.

First, I will talk about the borrowing limits. It is certainly important to make sure that ports can make their investments, that they are borrowing efficiently and that everything else as a system is monitored and controlled. It should be done in such a way as to ensure they have secure borrowing and can be able to pay the bills. To date, the government has not had to step in. We would not want a situation where there was excess borrowing where ports could not control themselves.

The next area is access to contribution funding. This is perhaps my biggest concern with the bill. It is related to making ports eligible for funding through existing programs. Of course, we all agree that ports have to have funding, but it is perplexing to me as to why the government, if it believes in that, just does not provide the funding and why it would want to take the money from other federal government programs as opposed to providing a program for the ports. For instance, the ports want funding for infrastructure and security, which of course what we want, but why would the government take that money from other areas?

We have limited infrastructure. The government, fortunately, after extensive lobbying, carried on the infrastructure programs to the tune of \$33 billion but changed the conditions. Most of the municipalities across Canada have not heard how much of that they are going to get. I have said time and time again in the House, and I know the Minister of Finance has heard me, that municipalities have to get the same amount of infrastructure money as they did under the previous government, which was \$33 billion, and they need to know the rules so they can apply it and it is not distributed all over the place.

The municipalities have not heard for so long, the new rules are not out, and there is worry across the country. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Association of Yukon Communities have been wondering when they are going to hear what the rules are and how much of that money they are going to get. Are they still going to get the same amount of the infrastructure money as they did in the past?

The primary reason these programs were started in the first place was for the municipalities of this country. The Liberal Party will never cease to stand up for the municipalities to ensure they get their fair share of that funding. That is why, when there is a provision in this bill that adds another important need for funding to the same pile money, it is very worrying to me. Everyone will certainly be watching to make sure the ports get their money, but that the municipalities in Canada are not deprived of the funds they so desperately need.

• (1230)

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of other people who might wish to comment on the lucid approach that my colleague from Yukon employed when speaking to this particular bill, I will ask him to elaborate a little bit, if he would not mind, on this perception that there is one limited pot and that everything is a zero sum game.

I know this is a position that the NDP has verbalized on many an occasion, but given that municipalities are, shall I say in the main, corporate entities, and as corporate entities, that have a particular jurisdiction and authority that derives from the people's trust, they access infrastructure funds in order to maintain a particular level of service and goods, et cetera, that are important for the maintenance of a good, lively, commercial enterprise. Does he not see that this might be equally valid for another corporation, another corporate entity, an authority whose authority is derived through legislation, and that this authority, in order to maintain its livelihood and its commercial viability, would also have access to some of those public funds that are designed to maintain the infrastructure of commercial viability everywhere around the country?

If he were to agree with me, and I am obviously waiting with bated anticipation that he would, would he not think then that this argument that is proposed often by the NDP actually takes us off the mark and distracts us from what we are trying to accomplish, and that is to ensure that entities like port authorities, which he has so eloquently advanced as being physically and financially viable in order to meet the challenges of the new commerce of tomorrow? I wonder what his thoughts might be.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Just before I answer the question, Mr. Speaker, I was reminded of an item I did not have time to get in, in my 20 minutes, which dealt with another type of investment important for ports and it is the security investment. We need to do much better monitoring. I know we are doing great work on that, but the ports actually need the money to put in sophisticated equipment, for instance, for scanning containers, et cetera.

Government Orders

In regard to the member's point, I am not sure we have a disagreement because I was basically saying that both entities need the funds: the ports and the municipalities. I am not sure which NDP argument he was referring to because I am not aware of that, but in relation to the ports, I definitely think they need funds for infrastructure and security through these types of investments.

However, when we started all these infrastructure funds, our first need was for the municipalities. I do not treat the municipalities as a corporation. Municipalities are an order of government. There are four orders of government in Canada, and hon. members will notice I am not saying levels of government: federal, provincial and territorial, first nations and municipal. These four orders of government are not stakeholders. They are not interest groups. They are governments. Each government has its needs in balancing its responsibility, as it says in the Constitution of Canada, to provide equal services to Canadians across the country, wherever they are.

The needs of the municipality, as a government, are very important. That is why we came up with that amount of money, which has now been basically morphed into the \$33 billion building Canada fund.

I am saying that we should not detract from the amount that municipalities were getting, unless the municipality chooses that a port authority is one of its priorities and that is where it would like its particular money to go. In our area, two waterfronts were very important investments. If that is an investment of a municipality, I have no problem with making a port eligible.

Over the years moneys were promised to municipalities through infrastructure programs: strategic infrastructure, rural infrastructure, border infrastructure, the gas tax rebate, and the GST rebate. However, I do not want to see the moneys needed by municipalities for huge infrastructure all of a sudden develop new terms and conditions, and all of a sudden they have a new player in the field that is eligible for the money, without adding to the pot of money.

That is the point I was trying to make. I hope that is not in conflict with the point that our critic was trying to make because he and I, as I think, we both said that in our speeches. We are big supporters of ports. There are needs for the modernization of ports and there are also needs for increased investments in ports.

The borrowing provisions of the bill will help ports actually invest in themselves. Once they are more efficient, they will have more revenues to help them be self-sufficient in order to pay for these investments.

•(1235)

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is misleading the public about the impacts of changes to the Marine Act through Bill C-23.

If anyone opposite wonders why cities are so upset with the Conservative government, they need to look no further than this bill which will further reduce infrastructure funding for cities. Moreover, it changes the governance regulations for port authorities, like the unaccountable, unelected and undemocratic Toronto port authority.

Currently, port authorities are legislated to be self-sustaining. They are not supposed to depend on the federal government for handouts or subsidies.

The government is ramming through a bill and has opposed all of the NDP amendments which would allow the Toronto port authority, and other port authorities, to apply for federal infrastructure funds desperately needed by cities like Toronto and others across Canada. It also would extend the terms of the board of directors, decrease the size of the board, and make the port authorities even less accountable.

The Liberals do not even bat an eyelash. They simply roll over and are letting the Conservatives pass the bill to avoid public scrutiny. They together in fact oppose hearings at committee, hearings that Parliament could conduct across Canada so that we could hear from municipalities and citizens about the bill. That was opposed even though the NDP proposed it during the debate at committee.

It is too bad that the 20 members of the House elected from Toronto in the Liberal Toronto caucus will not listen to the city councillors, the mayor and advocates for our city. They have said that the bill is bad for our ridings, bad for our economy, and will not do anything to fix Toronto or any other city's crumbling infrastructure. It is too bad these MPs are afraid to face the good citizens of Toronto.

The bill is a clear signal that the Conservatives cannot be trusted to give cities what they need to grow and prosper in the 21st century. On the weekend, on both Saturday and Sunday, across Canada and especially in Toronto there were Jane Jacobs walks. Of course, people know that Jane Jacobs is a renowned urban philosopher, a planner, and it is her version of cities that are world renowned.

She urges Canadians and Parliament to close a dangerous Trojan horse down. What she is talking about is of course the Toronto port authority. Why? Because the port authority was imposed by the former government, the Liberals, against the wishes of Torontonians. It was formed through changes in the Marine Act in 2001.

In downtown Toronto we have 100,000 people living at the Toronto waterfront and another 100,000 who will work there when all the developments are finished. The Toronto official website says:

Toronto's waterfront is our front porch to the world. With the right kind of investment, the waterfront will become a necklace of green, with pearls of activity; people living, working and enjoying it with pride and passion.

The Toronto port authority vision, on the other hand, is to create an industrial strip dominated by an airport. These two visions are obviously incompatible. Instead of a strip of green with 215 acres of land, we now have an airport and planes flying out creating about 2,865 kilograms of CO₂ pollution in the air. It certainly is not the vision of a clean, green waterfront.

Government Orders

●(1240)

Jane Jacobs is not alone. Another very famous Torontonian was Allan Sparrow, who unfortunately passed away from cancer last week. Mr. Sparrow was the founder of a group called Community AIR, with 2,000 members in Toronto. It has been pushing the federal government to put the port authorities back into the hands of the citizens.

As a former Toronto city councillor, Allan Sparrow inspired a generation of reform-minded progressives with his ahead of his time thinking about our environment. He dreamed of a clean and livable city that all could enjoy. His role in shaping the Toronto we know and love today should not be forgotten. His legacy will live on in the movements that he inspired, such as closing the Toronto Island Airport and, of course, promoting a clean and livable waterfront community.

I want to talk about the contrast between the Toronto Port Authority and Allan Sparrow's vision. He said:

As for the ongoing battle over the future of the Island Airport lands, some things never change. The privileged and civically disengaged will continue to pollute and degrade Toronto's waterfront with their "save a few minutes at all costs" life style...at the end of the day, the larger community will prevail, but not without struggle.

Why is the Toronto downtown waterfront important? I want to talk about the neighbourhood that surrounds the waterfront. The waterfront communities, through Allan Sparrow, designed the beautiful St. Lawrence neighbourhood as a new, model downtown community at that time. It embraced a mix of affordable and market priced housing, centred on a park and community recreation centre. There were non-profit projects. Whether people are young or old, they enjoy living there. It is the same thing in the Harbourfront area with the Harbourfront Community Centre. This has happened all along the waterfront.

What Mr. Sparrow was particularly good at was that as a businessman he looked at the business case of the Toronto Port Authority and at its financial statements. He was very clear that in 2006, for example, the financial statements of the Toronto Port Authority showed that it made \$5 million in revenue but spent \$5.2 million to operate. It was obviously a money losing operation.

Mr. Sparrow was a very good business person. He founded a consulting company, Domicity, which in fact helped the federal government quite a few years ago in regard to attracting IT investment to Canada. He led missions to Japan, Korea and the Silicon Valley. We know that he was a person who knew a lot about businesses and a lot about large private and government organizations.

Allan Sparrow very clearly said that the port authority was unsustainable and that the business case it presented would forever lose money. Because of that, he knew that the expansion of the island airport by the port authority would be a disaster for the City of Toronto and its plans to create a clean and green waterfront.

He was also very concerned about the increase in air traffic bringing water and noise pollution to one of the most densely populated parts of the city. In his very focused and deliberate way, Allan Sparrow decided he would do everything in his power to stop

it. In 2002 he founded Community AIR and was the group's spokesperson in the formative years of the fight.

As the number of people involved in fighting the port authority grew, more people went to the annual general meetings of the port authority. It became more obvious that these port authorities were not at all accountable. It was noticed that when the port authorities conducted their environmental assessment process, it really was not a clear and open process. This very strong organization, which represented the City of Toronto and the citizens of Toronto, was not given a voice.

●(1245)

I wish that the Toronto Port Authority had people like Jane Jacobs and Allan Sparrow on its board of directors so that the people's voices would actually be heard in these port authorities. What do we have instead under Bill C-23? We have a smaller board of directors whose terms can be extended not just once but twice.

The former Liberal government appointed a lot of its friends to the port authorities, and in the last two or three years the Conservatives have been appointing lobbyists and a former Conservative staffer of the finance minister to the port authority, whereas citizens and the people who represent the users and who really know something about running ports are not appointed. The Jane Jacobses and Allan Sparrows never have a chance to have a say in how the Toronto Port Authority is being run.

It is a disgrace. This bill is a step in the wrong direction. We know that every political movement is built on the shoulders of those who came before, whether it is the Jane Jacobses and the Allan Sparrows of the world or someone else. Their leadership, their personal style and their vision of what great cities and countries are all about have been missed completely in the bill.

We note that if lobbyists or political friends can have a contract or a term renewed twice, we are looking at nine years of them being in a port authority that has absolutely no say from the local cities or citizens or the elected councillors.

We have also noted that the bill has no accountability. Many municipalities are speaking against it. We oppose access to federal funds for the Toronto Port Authority and other port authorities because it would drain the funds from a central pot and the crumbling infrastructure of municipalities would continue to crumble.

We also note that the bill will give the minister authority to expand the borrowing limits of port authorities. If they go bankrupt, guess what? It will be taxpayers who will be left holding the bag or trying to pay off those debts. Or maybe the Toronto Port Authority, as it has done before, will sue everyone. It sued the city of Toronto and the federal government and made off with a lot of money, with millions, in fact.

Another change in Bill C-23 that is a dangerous area is that it licenses landholdings. It would allow port authorities to license landholdings to third parties with absolutely no input and no comment from local municipalities.

Government Orders

In yet another area, Bill C-23 gives no standards for security measures. For the port authority in downtown Toronto, right by the CN Tower and hundreds of thousands of residents of that highly dense area, there are really no standards for security measures.

Bill C-23 also does not give the Auditor General any power to investigate port authorities' financial practices, so the port authority is not accountable financially, and neither is it accountable to local citizens.

For those reasons, the NDP and residents of Toronto will continue to fight and will strive to return the port authorities to the people of Toronto and the citizens of Canada. Bill C-23 concerning Marine Act changes is certainly a step in the wrong direction.

• (1250)

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with only one thing my friend has brought before us today and that is everything she said. I sat on the committee. I heard every meeting. I heard every witness. With respect, I saw the member show up for a couple of photo ops for five or ten minutes during one committee meeting. I do not remember her being there at any other opportunity to listen to evidence.

In fact, we actually received unanimous support from the Association of Canadian Port Authorities, the Shipping Federation of Canada and the Chamber of Marine Commerce for these positive changes that we have brought forward to this act.

In response to her comments on infrastructure funding, I should note that during the period of time the Liberals were in office for 13 years they spent approximately \$1.3 billion per year on infrastructure in Canada. The Conservative government has spent over \$5 billion per year, so there is enough money from this federal government going into provincial coffers to help with what we now have as a deficit in this country.

I have a question for the member. We did have an opportunity to consult with the City of Burnaby, the City of Nanaimo, North Vancouver, Port Alberni, Port Moody, Richmond, the City of Vancouver and the districts of North Vancouver and West Vancouver, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, of which the City of Toronto is a member, the Greater Vancouver Regional District, the Halifax Regional Municipality, the Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce, the Toronto Harbourfront Community Association, and the St. Lawrence Economic Development Council. They were all consulted.

We never had one city come forward and speak against this bill, not one, so I am wondering what channel the member is on. Quite frankly, I do not understand it. Without the ports being a great and integral part of this country, we will not have the economic prosperity that we need in this country to continue during this economic global slowdown.

I am wondering what channel she is on and if she could be more specific. If she has some evidence of a city opposing this bill, then I ask her to bring it forward. I would like to see her table that because we have not heard it and we have been talking about this for a long time. I know that member just wants to come forward for the photo ops on committee, but we have not heard this, so if she is going to

speaking about a bill, then maybe she could be accurate in her representations, because she is not at this stage.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, speaking about misleading, the Conservative government consults but it does not listen.

The City of Toronto actually has put forward two motions that have said very clearly that the Toronto Port Authority must be returned to the citizens of Toronto, that it should be disbanded. That motion was very clear. It was supported. It was voted on democratically. It was submitted as evidence to the transport committee.

The Conservative and Liberal members of Parliament choose not to look at facts and the black and white motions from the city of Toronto. Then they say they have consulted everybody. A lot of municipalities say they want to see local councillors on these port authorities, but no, port authorities cannot have local councillors. Perhaps they are not very accountable. That is why they do not want elected representatives on these bodies that have a say over how funds are used and how lands are used, lands that are supposed to be for all Canadians, not for the chosen few, the big corporations, the elite and the most powerful. These lands are supposed to be for all Canadians, but they have no say.

No city councillors are allowed to be on any of the port authorities. However, if one is a friend of the Conservative government, if one used to work for a former finance minister in the Harris government or a few of the Conservative MPs, one can be appointed to the Toronto Port Authority, for example. They have control over these lands. They have control. What kind of accountability are we talking about? What kind of democracy are we talking about? What kind of consultation are we talking about? How is the Conservative government listening to the people of Toronto?

No wonder there are no Conservative MPs from the city of Toronto. Over and over again, it has not been listened to. A local councillor, Mr. Adam Vaughan, was a witness for Bill C-23 and said he was very opposed to this bill. Guess what? He was shouted down. He was told that perhaps he did not really represent the City of Toronto and that perhaps he did not really represent the citizens of Toronto. I am sorry, but Mr. Vaughan was elected and there is absolutely no reason to say that the citizens have not—

• (1255)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I recognize the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities on a point of order, which I hope is a point of order.

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, that particular councillor made it very clear he did not represent the city. I would hate to see the member make misrepresentations in the House and it not be dealt with. That is a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for the point of order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Government Orders

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one, I listened courteously to what I can only describe as a diatribe against all members of Parliament who represent the city of Toronto but are not of the member's stripe.

Two, there was a series of misrepresentations about what actually transpired. The invitation was sent out to everyone who appeared before the committee. The parliamentary secretary speaks for the government side and mentioned everybody who attended.

Of the people who were there and sided with the member, one of them was a local councillor who in fact said, "I am coming here as an individual. I don't represent the city of Toronto. I represent my own views". The other two individuals who came forward were, as the member has described them, friends of hers, who are part of Community Air and who proceeded to issue forth the same type of venom that the member has indicated a capacity to engage in. It was the kind of venom that prompted a court to order them to apologize or submit to a \$3 million lawsuit. I do not have to read from this document but I can table it. A news item on CBC pointed out that Community Air was compelled not only to apologize but to promise to cease and desist in the kind of language they were using about the port authority. Representatives of Community Air came before the committee and engaged in exactly the same thing.

I would like to know whether the member thinks that all legislation in this House needs to address singly and exclusively the issues of her former ward, or whether, when we talk about marine and port policy for all of Canada, we are going to engage in policy that applies to all Canadians. Does she think if it does not have something to do with Trinity—Spadina then it is not Canadian, if it does not have to do with her ward then it is not legitimate, and if it does not emanate from the former harbour commission, which was identified as one of the most corrupt agencies ever, then it is not legitimate?

As a former councillor in Toronto, would she cease and desist—
• (1300)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member, I am sure, would like to hear from the other hon. member.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, the waterfront in Toronto includes lands that are much bigger than my riding. I wish I represented all of it. However, there are neighbourhoods all along the waterfront that have said no to this port authority. They have said no together with the mayor, the councillors and city council. No twisting of facts occurred here.

If members of Parliament are convinced that they are right, why would they be afraid of actually going to some local municipalities like the city of Toronto and conducting hearings to see what kind of witnesses would appear? They are too afraid to listen to citizens. They want to do it in a very quick manner, rush the bill through, not listen to citizens all across the waterfront, and not hear from citizens at all. That is why this bill is being fast tracked and it is a disgrace.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate, having worked on the committee to ensure that the bill would provide the detail and implementable advantages that it purported to do when it was first presented. As a member of Parliament one has to assume a certain

sense of responsibility. One has to examine the intent of the legislation, question the minister, probe the bureaucracy, and then go out into the field and consult with those who are going to be first and foremost impacted by the legislation. Without undue modesty, I did all three.

As a concession to a new member of the NDP, we asked at the very last meeting dealing with Bill C-23 if we could have more detail for that new member, and I see that the member is paying attention so that is good. That member was invited to bring forward new witnesses with proposed amendments. The only people he was able to come up with were the ones we have talked about, such as people involved with Community Air who came as individuals, and a councillor who came as an individual. As for amendments, I know that listeners cannot see, but when I put my index finger and my thumb together, it forms a zero. There were none. When the member says that there are people who rejected amendments, I am still at a loss to understand which amendments were presented that were rejected. There were none.

I come back to the concept of what the legislation was intended to do.

I have great respect for all members of Parliament who come here to represent the views of their citizens. They come here to address the issues that are germane to the growth of Canada. A parliamentarian of great note thanked his constituents for voting him in as their representative but he also said that he was now a member of the Parliament of Canada.

As a member of the Parliament of Canada, each and every one of the members on that committee looked at all the port authorities to see what they needed in order to become viable commercial entities capable of meeting the challenges of the economies of tomorrow.

As a member of the former government, I said that at least from its intent the legislation was worthy of consideration. We will see if it is worthy of support. I said it and I might have been selfish, but indulge me for a moment. When I was in government with my cabinet colleagues and my caucus colleagues, we fashioned a policy that we thought would enhance the future of Canada and all Canadians. Whether they lived in downtown Toronto, Yukon or Atlantic Canada, it did not matter. The policy was designed to ensure that we would have gateways of access and success in the west, in central Canada and in Atlantic Canada. We thought we were all-encompassing.

We had provisions in place for all of those ports that some might say are northern ports, those which the coastal areas of Atlantic Canada and British Columbia might think of as secondary ports, but they are very important ports. More important for all of Canada, we wanted to position the port authorities such that they would be able to meet the challenges of the economies that were beginning to develop everywhere around the world.

At the very first instance we asked if these ports were commercially viable. Some ports are bigger than others. We divided them into two tiers. It is no secret that the first three are Vancouver, Montreal and Halifax. We put in a cutoff of \$25 million. Those ports do that amount of business. They are the ports that will be the fulcrum for transportation around the world.

Government Orders

● (1305)

There are other ports, tier two, which are equally significant, perhaps locally, but they are not the hubs around which spokes will be developed. We recognize that. However, that does not mean they should not be prepared to take advantage of the vagaries of commerce. We could dispense with them, move them over to one side, eliminate them, say they have no value, and then watch as their communities languish while commerce takes a look someplace else. We thought that would not be responsible for Canadians and so we said that we needed to make sure that some of these ports can amalgamate.

Quite frankly, the ports in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia needed to have one authority for efficiency and effectiveness purposes. They needed to be able to make the investments in their infrastructure so that they could receive commerce from the interior of Canada, the interior of the continent, and make sure that it could be expeditiously shipped to those ports and those markets in the Orient and southeast Asia and along the western coast of Canada and down along, I guess we would call it, the eastern Pacific rim.

In order to do that, we had to give those ports the legislative authority to amalgamate; to ensure that they could borrow on the open market commensurate with their commercial ability; and to be like other corporate entities, capable of accessing government advantages through infrastructure programs as an example, or through other programs that would give them the advantage that all Canadians would expect of any of their organizations that would be directed to enhancing the Canadian livelihood, the standard of living and the quality of life. That is what we all intended to do.

We sought witnesses from all sectors of the economy and society, and indeed governments, as my colleague from Yukon said, from all orders of government, one might say from all levels of government, but all governments interested. We sought their advice. We sought the advice of those in the industry and the businesses, the port authorities that came before us. We asked them where the deficiencies were in the legislation, what they needed to do. We invited everyone. It may be that others might not have heeded the call. It is rather unfortunate. But we took that extra step; we went out and sought the advice of those who would be impacted.

It is interesting. For example, the former speaker concentrated everything on Toronto. I am a citizen of Toronto. I have lived all of my life there. I am a specialist. I went there and got all of my education over and over again so that I could say, yes, I am from Toronto. I hold no place higher than anyone else, but I will not take a second position to anyone else about how my city has developed, should develop and what is important for its citizens whom I have been proud to represent for these last almost 20 years. I have learned in those 20 years that somebody can make a distinction between the spin indicated for a particular purpose and good sound public policy.

Here I am as the transport critic for the official opposition supporting a piece of government legislation that has gone through all of the appropriate filters, examinations and critiques. As I indicated, I avowed very early it is because it was generated by the former government of which I was a member.

● (1310)

This is a happy confluence of two different parties, two different governments, recognizing the import of this bill for all of Canada. In fact, even the Bloc Québécois on that committee said that this bill was good for transportation policy, irrespective of the colour of the party in power. Surely that has to be the test of good legislation. I do not think the government can take full credit for it. Nor am I reaching back into the past to say that it is ours and that is why we are doing it. Nor do our colleagues in the Bloc say that it is their legislation and they will put their brand on it.

This is something where, collectively, members of Parliament came from the various regions of the country. As I indicated at the beginning of my discussion, they were elected as representatives of their people, but they came here to become members of Parliament. That meant they assumed the obligation to see everything from the prism of the public good.

Three of the four parties in the House support this legislation, wholeheartedly, after having gone through the appropriate examination and underscoring the fact that we were talking about strengthening the commercial viability, the ability to borrow and the governance models of all these ports. I hearken to point out that each and every one of these ports has representatives from the communities in which they are located, representatives who are suggested and recommended by the municipalities in which they are located.

Yes, they must finally receive the stamp of approval of the then minister of transport, but even in my own city, that port authority has representatives from the municipality, the province and the federal authority. All three orders of government are represented in a port authority, which number one objective must be to ensure that if there are advantages to be gained from commerce to be shipped through the Great Lakes, some of it be resident in the area of Toronto.

One might ask how big a port is it. Despite all the criticisms, it ranks, according to Transport Canada and according to the volume of operating revenue, number eight in the country. It is not bad for a port that is not supposed to be doing anything. Only 10 other significant ports rank below it. What we have seen over the course of this last little while is the ebb and flow of commerce, the value of commodities that are shipped from the interior of our great country to other parts of the world, is making its way through a transportation system in which various ports are key.

For example, I think of the great port of Thunder Bay, which at one time was the second most important inland port in all of Canada, second only to Montreal. It has suffered some decline partly because a lot of the materials, a lot of the commodities, minerals as well as lumber has been shipped out west through the port of Vancouver, now Prince Rupert.

Government Orders

This does not mean that all the investment Canadian governments before us made in building a seaway to ensure all the products were produced in the centre of Canada, my province being most significant in this regard, would come through a St. Lawrence Seaway system, of which the port of Toronto is a very important element. However, it is not the only port in the Great Lakes Seaway system. We have seen more and more investments in the port of Montreal. It has begun to flourish in a way that people had not anticipated.

One can be morose, critical or shortsighted and say that we should forget all those 19 major ports throughout the country because those people in one port city of the country might be interested only in the land development side of the port authority. Therefore, we should forget about the flow of commerce, transportation and goods from the markets, which are particularly Canadian, out to an export environment where they will enhance the standard of living of all Canadians.

• (1315)

Happily, the majority of members of Parliament in the House do not have that same disposition. Happily, members of Parliament recognize their obligation to the Canadian common weal. Happily, we have saner minds in the House that are prepared to take a look at what must be done.

What must be done includes not only those gateways to central and western Canada, but to all those ports that provide the world with an avenue into Canada, coming from the Atlantic ports, of which Halifax is the largest and is the most commercially viable. However, it is not the only one.

We have a tendency to focus on all those that are of great interest to us. I have a particular soft spot in my heart for the port of Halifax. It is the port which received me when I first came to this country. It is a wonderful place. I am surprised we have not made much more of Halifax than it currently is, but it ranks as either the best or the second best. It is among the top three natural ports, natural harbours in the entire world.

The port of Halifax is a gateway for everything that could come from Europe and Africa. The most logical place for all that commerce to come in through is either Halifax or Saint John. In fact, there are others, but Halifax is by far the biggest. Through it, we could build that kind of an infrastructure, that kind of a network, which would enhance the economic viabilities of so many communities throughout all of Canada.

Bill C-23 speaks to the importance of marine ports. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, and you know this better than others because of where you come from, all those marine ports are tied to a road and rail infrastructure that spreads out in a network through the rest of the marketplace, which is North America. There are none that are better positioned to do that, in my view, than Halifax or mainland Vancouver, Nanaimo, Prince Rupert, Fraser River Valley and Montreal.

There are other ports, but those hubs ought to give Canada the advantage that other countries naturally cannot enjoy. Therefore, we have been gifted by the bounty of geography and the good Lord, some might say, and we should take advantage of it.

I come from a city that is one of the most advantaged in the world. I am not anxious to see us lose one of those elements that give us this great advantage, even if, over the course of the last several years, we have allowed it to slip into an inferior position relative to others. However, such is the competition among Canadians that the competition among these port cities and port societies all enhance the livelihood of the citizens they serve. They might serve most directly those with which they are adjacent, but they serve the larger Canadian advantage that all of us share and advocate when we run for office.

Members in the House sometimes might put partisan advantage and partisan diatribe ahead of our obligation as members of Parliament. While I am capable of engaging in that kind of dialogue and would reserve it for fun moments, for serious moments like this one, I call on all members of Parliament to do what I know my caucus will do, and that is support a bill that is absolutely focused on ensuring the Canadian advantage is maintained by giving port authorities good governance and access to loans and an opportunity to enhance the infrastructure for greater commercial viability down the road.

My colleagues on the committee all felt that way. Those who did the work, appreciate this most. Those who appreciate this most, will support it. Those who support it, know that its intent is good. This is what the Liberal Party will do and it will vote for it.

• (1320)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the comments of the member bill. I appreciate the fact that he has a certain point of view and he believes this is the way to go. I sense from his comments, however, that if one does not agree with this, somehow one is not holding the public interest as high as it should be.

I question him on some of the points been put forward, who I agree with in many ways, that this leaves the public open and vulnerable in a way that it should not. The point is specifically on those from the municipal side of the equation.

I know he has worked with colleagues from Toronto and I am sure he has spoken with colleagues from across the country about municipalities holding the bag often. As parliamentarians, it is our role to ensure that this does not happen and that the public interest is protected at all levels of government, but particularly at the municipal level. As he knows, the municipal level right now is certainly feeling the pinch in infrastructure.

Notwithstanding the member has a point of view and supports the bill, does he not see the point that has been raised by critics of the bill, that there needs to be more done to ensure those at the local level are not left holding the bag literally and that it is a fair point of view, which should be given more consideration than it has?

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, I started off by saying I respect everybody's point of view. We are in a political environment. Views can be supported by data or not, but they are points of view and as valid as the next ones.

Government Orders

I wanted to make a distinction between that and a position that emanates from someone who has worked to do something. I can like a house. I can have a view that it might be an ugly building or a good building, but if I am the one who put it together, I can speak about its structural viability and its utility. I can talk mechanically about whether it is something that deserves the appreciation of those who are engaged in the business of that construction.

I do not hold it against anyone to have a different point of view. However, in terms of governance, I did not think there was great merit in cascading a series of criticisms upon a bill that emanated from a perception that municipalities: (a) would not be represented on port authorities; and (b) would be left, if I might quote the member, “holding the bag” because funds would be removed from one area and put into this area. I do not think either one of them are substantive. I took pains to point out that all these port authorities already had representatives from the municipal area. Therefore, that should be taken as a consideration.

In terms of accessing government funds made available for infrastructure and other programs, I do not think they are mutually exclusive. If someone thinks the federal government should put more funds into programs, that the provincial governments ought to put more funds into building infrastructure, nobody is depriving them of an opportunity to make that case down the road. Whether it is in this program or another program, there is nothing exclusive about these types of programs or the government's disposition to expend in those areas.

In fact, it is probably what distinguishes one party from another, whether one thinks that a government should be more hands off, more stand back, more *laissez-faire*, to use a more classical term, or whether it should be much more strategic and interventionist. That is what distinguishes one group of elected members from another.

From my perspective, we would do wanton damage if we did not continue to build. As someone said, “If you build, they will come”. That might be true. All I know is if we do not build, they will not come. If we do not pass this bill, it will not happen.

• (1325)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning I flew in from the island airport. I have started to change my flying patterns from Pearson to the island airport because, frankly, it is worth an hour to me each time. I am not comparing myself to a lot of other colleagues who have literally hours and hours of flying but an hour is not insignificant in terms of comparison. Pearson and the island airport are equal distance for me from my home.

One of the great ports in this country is Vancouver. It is not as if there are not other big ports in the country but Vancouver has a wonderful mix of commercial, residential and industrial and they seem to all get along reasonably well. I am not intimate with the political workings of the port of Vancouver but, as an occasional visitor to Vancouver, it does seem to work.

I cannot say the same is necessarily true of Toronto. Toronto, particularly at the island airport, is undergoing, what I consider to be, a huge case of NIMBYism, particularly in the riding of Trinity—Spadina, which the member for Trinity—Spadina just articulated and presented it as the views of the people of Toronto.

I wonder whether the hon. member would comment on how the bill might impact on that particular situation but, generally, as to this so-called loss of municipal representation on the port authorities.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I live in the city but I live closer to the Pearson airport. Not many people have spoken about the quality of air around where I come from, especially when planes start descending. He knows that any planes approaching the Toronto city airport are actually doing it from over the water.

However, I want to stay true to what I said earlier on, which is that people's views all need to be respected. The city of Toronto, or the GTA that is served by the Toronto city island airport, has about 5.5 million people. The number of people who have complained about the island airport are numbered in the thousands, not even the tens of thousands.

The member is probably right when he says that it is okay to have this airport as long as it is not in his backyard. When I moved to Toronto I knew the airport was there but it was okay. I bought where I did because it was a great location. However, right now I do not think I want to be here. I am hoping the city, the province or the federal government will put up barriers so my property will be evaluated upward. That is what happens around virtually all ports.

However, that takes away from the argument that the member asked me to comment on. He asked whether municipal concerns were represented on these port authorities and, in particular, on the Port Authority of Toronto. The answer is, yes. The city of Toronto gets to put forward names that it wants represented on that port authority so that, like all other port authorities, the local community has its say, there is no steamroller going over issues that are purely local and all development plans are vetted through the cities, through the provinces and through any other conservation authorities that might be in the area and that all the appropriate environmental assessments are done.

In other words, they need to fit into a municipal plan. That happens. It is logical to put in a good governance structure that takes that into consideration. We do it by having people who are associated with municipalities, with the provinces, with the federal government and, I dare say, even with the conservation authorities. That has been done already and it is seen in this legislation.

Just to close, the Toronto Port Authority is listed, as I indicated, on its revenues as a port, exclusive of all other revenues associated with the Toronto city centre airport. It is functioning as a marine port and all other considerations are extraneous to this bill.

• (1330)

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. There being no further members rising to participate in debate, is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: 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.

Government Orders

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: There has been a request that the vote on this motion be deferred until the end of government orders tomorrow.

* * *

NUCLEAR LIABILITY AND COMPENSATION ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-5, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: Before proceeding to report stage debate on Bill C-5, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident, the Chair would like to make the following ruling as is often the case when we get to report stage.

There are 21 motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-5.

[*Translation*]

Motions Nos. 10, 13 to 15, 19 and 20 will not be selected by the Chair as they could have been presented in committee.

[*English*]

All remaining motions have been examined and the Chair is satisfied that they meet the guidelines expressed in the notes to Standing Order 76(1)(5) regarding the selection of motions in amendment at the report stage.

Motions Nos. 1 to 9, 11, 12, 16 to 18 and 21 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 9, 11, 12, 16 to 18 and 21 to the House.

[*English*]

I might also add that, given that there was a point of order made earlier by the hon. parliamentary secretary, the Chair will be coming back with a more detailed ruling as soon as is possible. However, what we will do at the moment is begin the debate and then, as soon as possible, we will come back with a ruling responding to the point of order made earlier this day.

●(1335)

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-5 be amended by deleting Clause 21.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-5 be amended by deleting Clause 22.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-5, in Clause 23, be amended by replacing lines 23 and 24 on page 7 with the following:

“contains nuclear material, financial security to”

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-5, in Clause 24, be amended by deleting lines 39 to 42 on page 7 and lines 1 to 18 on page 8.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-5 be amended by deleting Clause 26.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-5 be amended by deleting Clause 30.

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-5 be amended by deleting Clause 32.

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-5, in Clause 34, be amended by deleting lines 15 to 23 on page 11.

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-5 be amended by deleting Clause 47.

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-5, in Clause 61, be amended by replacing lines 23 to 31 on page 16 with the following:

“Majesty in right of Canada the total of all amounts paid by the Minister under this Act.”

Motion No. 12

That Bill C-5, in Clause 62, be amended by deleting lines 19 to 26 on page 17.

Motion No. 16

That Bill C-5, in Clause 66, be amended by deleting lines 3 and 4 on page 19.

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-5, in Clause 66, be amended by deleting lines 7 to 9 on page 19.

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-5, in Clause 66, be amended by deleting lines 10 to 12 on page 19.

Motion No. 21

That Bill C-5, in Clause 68, be amended by deleting lines 1 to 3 on page 20.

He said: Mr. Speaker, after many months, the government is again bringing forward Bill C-5, the nuclear liability and compensation act. In the intervening times, different types of issues on the nuclear liability front have arisen and a full interest in this issue has been heightened over the period of time involved.

No one in any party wants to stand in the way of good legislation or to stand in the way of the things that need to be done for Canadians. While we supported the bill at second reading to get it to committee and to look at the types of issues that needed to be dealt with within the nuclear liability context, the results were less than what we felt were essential for Canadians.

As a member of Parliament from the Northwest Territories, the people I represent have had much experience with nuclear contamination over the years. Even though our numbers are very small, we have had that experience and we understand the results of that.

Government Orders

We have a community in the Northwest Territories called Deline. It used to be called Fort Franklin. It also was called the village of widows because it was on the shores of Great Bear Lake where the first mining for uranium took place in Canada on a large scale. The Port Radium mine brought lots of yellowcake out there. It was handled by the people in the community to a great extent. Even today we have not seen the end of this incident. We are in Port Radium cleaning up the mine. The people of Deline have gone through countless years of anguish over the results of what happened in that nuclear industry.

When we talk about nuclear liability and the need to protect individuals from the results of nuclear accidents and contamination spills, we in the Northwest Territories have a track record that we go back to. We know what the track record has been with other Canadian governments. The fact that we are still at a \$650 million liability limit for nuclear installations in this country, in this day and age, strikes me as being the clearest indicator that work has not been done in this field.

As well, when it comes to more recent examples of contamination that have occurred in the Northwest Territories, I refer back to Cosmos 954 where we had a very small nuclear reactor in a Russian satellite that burned up over the Northwest Territories. The contamination from that unit was spread over 14,000 square kilometres. In fact, it required intensive searches by trained professionals throughout all our communities to locate very small amounts of nuclear contamination and eliminate them. It was a very expensive process.

What it showed us was how difficult it is to deal with nuclear contamination, how long the issues last and how long this goes on for in our society once there is a nuclear accident.

We felt that more work needed to be done on this bill. We put forward a number of amendments at committee but they were rejected by the Conservatives, the Liberals and, to a great extent, by the Bloc, which brings us here today with the amendments that we have in front of this House right now.

One of the key amendments that we are looking for is to take out any limit on nuclear liability. Unlimited amounts would probably be the preferred method to deal with it, just as Germany does. It has an unlimited liability on nuclear facilities. That means that whatever the costs are, when there is an accident those who are responsible for the plant will need to pay those costs.

● (1340)

The \$650 million limit set in this bill pales next to that of our major trading partner, the United States of America, which has an \$8 billion to \$10 billion liability ceiling on its nuclear facilities. Most of our nuclear facilities are located in highly populated areas in southern Canada, areas similar to where the nuclear facilities are located in the United States.

Why should we think that our situation is remarkably different from the situation in the United States? Why should that be part of the equation? Is it because if we set the limit to where it should be, the nuclear industry would have to reflect the true costs of doing business in this country? If we set the ceiling at \$650 million, would we be giving the industry another break and Canadians would not

have a clear indication of the issues surrounding the industry and the associated costs?

The Conservatives are taking a very cavalier attitude toward nuclear safety. We saw that before Christmas. I do not want to denigrate the effort Parliament made with respect to the issues surrounding Chalk River, but it showed how much trouble we have working on issues around nuclear safety in this country. We saw the method by which these very serious issues were derailed by the government by its failure to pay attention to them. We saw the blame game that was played with the Nuclear Safety Commission.

Those things all stand out as stark examples of why we have to be very careful with the kind of legislation we are dealing with here today. We need to protect Canadians. The first and foremost job of this institution is to protect and enhance the lives of Canadians. This bill does not accomplish that.

Many of these amendments speak to the difficult time Canadians would have in trying to achieve compensation if there was a nuclear accident. Many of the proposed amendments would make it better for Canadians to get the compensation they should be entitled to receive. The amendments would make sure that all the issues surrounding a nuclear contamination incident would be addressed. They would assure Canadians about the compensation they would receive and that they would not be tied up in court forever trying to get that compensation.

Those are some of the issues that have brought us to this point. The NDP is not trying to obstruct Parliament. We are trying to get these issues out front for Canadians to make sure they understand what is at stake here with this nuclear liability bill. We are not going to simply push it forward so that some other restructuring in the nuclear industry can take place. We are not going to simply push it forward so the nuclear industry can be assured that it will not be judged by U.S. standards when there is a contamination accident and might be judged by these much softer Canadian standards.

These are all issues behind the legislation. These are all reasons that the legislation appeared when it did. We agreed that there was a need to move ahead with better nuclear liability provisions. We had hoped for a fulsome and useful debate in committee where we could put forward the correct type of amendments, but that did not happen, and that has brought us to this stage here in the House of Commons.

I urge all members to take a look at what we are doing here. I urge them to consider the amendments and to consider the spirit in which they have been presented.

● (1345)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Western Arctic for his intervention and for initiating these amendments. I would like to ask my colleague a question concerning this bill and why it has been so long since we have seen Bill C-5. Canadians are aware of the incident that occurred at Chalk River during that time. It is interesting to observe that this bill was put aside for quite a while. We had quite a spirited debate in this House and certainly in society in general around nuclear safety.

Government Orders

Why is it that Bill C-5 is only being brought forward now? Why was it not brought forward earlier? It has been almost six months.

In light of the concerns that Canadians have expressed around nuclear safety and accountability, and which we have certainly debated in this House and outside this place, and we see governments such as the Ontario government moving full throttle on nuclear, why is it that the government is not paying more attention to the issue of nuclear safety and in this instance to the liability that stems from nuclear power?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to impute motives as to why this bill has taken six months to come back to Parliament for discussion. Certainly we had a most active and interesting debate around nuclear safety during December and into January concerning the Chalk River incident. That heightened the issues in the minds of Canadians. The issues are still there. We see the same kind of concern today as we saw during December and January. I do not think any delay of legislation is going to change that.

On the other point that my colleague mentioned in terms of the nuclear industry and where it is going, we see many actions taking place here. We hear talk about the restructuring of the nuclear industry as part of what is going on. Once again I am not able to impute motives. My job here is to speak to the liability issues within the bill.

I wholeheartedly ask members to consider whom we are protecting with this bill. How the bill should work to protect whom is key to a lot of what is going on here.

• (1350)

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to Bill C-5. I spoke in the debate at second reading and now I have the opportunity to speak at report stage.

Fundamentally, the bill is an administrative one. It does a lot of housecleaning on the Nuclear Liability Act. The last time that was done was over two decades ago. There has been a need for reforms, upgrades and updates. For several years the Department of Natural Resources did extensive work in preparing the bill and Bill C-5 was the outcome. We had the opportunity in committee to conduct a comprehensive study on the bill.

First, I will outline what the bill does. Initially it raises from \$75 million to \$650 million the limit of liability that any nuclear operator has to carry in case of an unlikely accident. Initially it was \$75 million, a very small figure. Obviously there was a need to raise that amount and this bill raises it to \$650 million. It also tightens up the definitions of liability and all associated legal terms that come with that liability.

The bill establishes clear criteria for operators to hold financial instruments or security to ensure that liability. Any operator must carry some type of financial security to ensure that the operator is viable and is able to comply with that liability. As well, the bill offers some flexibility on what type of financial instrument the operator can carry.

The minister is required to review the limit every five years. The bill allows for the liability to be increased through regulations; it is

no longer required through legislation. Also, the minister has to review it every five years and perhaps amend it.

The bill establishes a nuclear claims tribunal, which did not exist before. If there is a claim and there is a dispute, rather than settling it through the courts, an independent quasi-judicial tribunal will be able to adjudicate on those things.

The bill does a lot of excellent housecleaning work. It establishes criteria, tightens up definitions and expands on certain areas. It is the product of a lot of work and consultation.

The natural resources committee has done a great job in talking to all stakeholders and experts about the bill, its ramifications and its implications. We heard from nuclear operators, from insurers, host communities and municipalities that have nuclear power plants in their vicinities. We heard from experts, from NGOs. We heard from organizations that are anti-nuclear.

We had an opportunity to ask questions. As committee members we had an opportunity to engage with the experts and stakeholders. We had some amendments. Eventually we kept the bill as it stands.

There was an issue whether \$650 million was the right limit. There are other countries that have greater limits and there are other countries that have equivalent or smaller limits. The question is a legitimate one, not that other questions are not legitimate, but that question is the one we struggled with the most. What should the right limit be? Given that the royal recommendation of the bill set that figure as part of the core substance of the bill, it was very difficult logistically and procedurally to even contemplate an addition.

• (1355)

We are hoping that over the next few years the minister will look at this bill, conduct further studies, and consult with more groups. But, realistically speaking, the new figure of \$650 million seems reasonable and in parallel with a lot of the international standards, the Europe standards, and those of many countries around the world. It is a big jump from \$75 million, which is the current figure, and the bill is hoping to make it \$650 million.

The committee, to its credit, did a great job examining all the evidence. The bill actually passed in committee last December. Therefore, the question I have now is: Why did it take the minister six months to bring this bill back?

Many nuclear operators and groups have been waiting for this bill because they need stability in the industry but the minister has chosen to wait for six months. Once the bill is passed at report stage, we want to pressure the minister to bring it back as quickly as possible. Operators are waiting for this bill to become law. It is essential for their business and the future of this industry.

There are a lot of remaining questions about the Conservative government's ability to manage the nuclear industry and their vision of the role of nuclear in the future energy mix of our country. We saw how the Conservatives bungled the situation with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. We saw how they took unprecedented action by firing a quasi-judicial, independent nuclear commissioner just for doing her job.

The Auditor General's report criticized the government's handling of AECL, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. We heard from AECL about its need for finance support and some direction about the future. We know now Ontario is looking to buy a nuclear reactor and AECL is in the bid for that proposal. The problem is that Ontario needs to know what the Conservatives' plans are with AECL. They have yet to tell us about their plans. We know they hired a consultant in February. We have yet to hear what the mandate of that consultant is, when to expect a report or anything about their vision.

We also know that they promised to conduct a review of the fiasco that happened in Chalk River. We have yet to hear anything from that examination. Canadians are really uneasy about how the Conservative government has been handling and managing the nuclear file. We all know that nuclear has a bright future.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the time for statements by members has arrived. The member will have a minute and 42 seconds remaining in his speech.

Statements by members, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

CLEMENT BOWMAN

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today and pay tribute to one of the greatest minds Sarnia—Lambton has known.

Dr. Clement Bowman has won one of the world's most prestigious scientific honours, the Global International Energy Prize, which he will share with two prominent Russian scientists. The award is designed to foster international cooperation in solving challenges in the power generation industry.

Dr. Bowman came to Sarnia in 1960 and his research and development has taken him across the world, yet he has always returned to Sarnia.

Dr. Bowman's career highlights include: chair of Alberta's technology and research advisory committee, president of the Alberta Research Council, vice-president responsible for the research centre at Esso Petroleum Canada, founding chairman of the Alberta oil sands technology and research authority. This latest award is just one of many, including becoming a Member of the Order of Canada in 1994.

I commend Dr. Bowman for his continued dedication to research and development on behalf of Sarnia—Lambton and all Canadians, who are so proud of his accomplishments.

Statements by Members

NATIONAL YOUTH WEEK

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National Youth Week is held during the first week of May and is dedicated to the celebration of youth and their active participation in their community.

Youth Week brings young people of different communities together to promote youth achievement, activism and volunteerism.

Its goal is to motivate and inspire young people in Canada and internationally to contribute to their community year round.

I encourage all members of the House and all of the communities across this great country to celebrate this highly enthusiastic and immensely valuable segment of our society.

National Youth Week is an opportunity for all communities to celebrate our youth.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MASKINONGÉ BUSINESS AWARDS EVENING

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the regional municipality of Maskinongé recently held its 20th Soirée des sommets, an event celebrating excellence in the municipality's socio-economic sectors.

Through their actions, their vitality and their creativity, the honorees are helping to enhance the wealth and quality of life of this part of the Mauricie region. I congratulate Maskinongé's chamber of commerce and industry, the many volunteers and the local development centre, the community futures development corporation, Emploi-Québec, the regional municipality and the municipal councils, which enthusiastically support our socio-economic sector.

However, the regional municipality is suffering because of cuts this government has made to regional programs and the lack of support for its manufacturing sector. This is yet more proof that this government does not understand or respect Quebec's interests.

* * *

[*English*]

HOUSING

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate members of Faith in Action in Victoria for organizing one of 80 silent protests throughout B.C. last Saturday to raise awareness about the crisis of homelessness and inadequate housing in our country. They call for action by all levels of government.

Despite the urgent and critical problems of housing affordability, the 2008 federal budget was virtually silent about extending existing programs.

Statements by Members

Churches and other organizations can play a role, but they do not have sufficient resources to solve this crisis. It is clear the marketplace will not house the poor either.

Only the federal government has the ability to make the policy changes to end homelessness and make affordable housing a reality across Canada.

Victoria residents call on the government to establish a national social housing policy in Canada.

* * *

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this month marks the 65th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic during the second world war.

It was not until May 1943, after receiving more training, air cover, special intelligence and better equipment, that the tide turned in favour of the Allies.

The Battle of the Atlantic is further proof of the determination and resilience of our Canadian heroes. This battle would last six long years. Six long years of repeated enemy attacks and severe conditions.

However, the men and women of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Merchant Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force protected Allied convoys and our own coastline and prevailed. Sadly, more than 4,600 brave men and women lost their lives at sea.

We pledge to remember for all time the bravery and courage of our veterans and those who paid the ultimate sacrifice, so that we might enjoy a country blessed with peace and freedom.

* * *

NATIONAL ELIZABETH FRY WEEK

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is National Elizabeth Fry Week, celebrated each year by the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies.

The goal is to enhance public awareness and education regarding the circumstances of victimized and criminalized women involved in the justice system.

The majority of women who are imprisoned in Canada are mothers; most of them the sole supporters of their families at the time they were incarcerated. When mothers are sentenced to prison, their children are sentenced to separation. So, attention is drawn to this reality by ending Elizabeth Fry Week on mother's day each year.

This week gives us a chance to consider the work being done by the Elizabeth Fry Society. It is challenging all Canadians to reach behind the walls and bring women into our communities, so that they may take responsibility and account for their actions in ways that make sense to them and to us.

●(1405)

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, mental health week is upon us. I am pleased to take this opportunity to update the House on Canada's new mental health commission.

It was just last year that this Conservative government, led by this Prime Minister, established the mental health commission to bring forward real action and solutions to the issues facing Canadians. In budget 2007, we committed \$55 million to the commission itself and then this past February, we announced an additional \$110 million for five regional projects.

These projects will undertake activities in three areas: facilitating the development of the national mental health strategy, fostering knowledge exchange, and undertaking public education and public awareness activities to combat the stigma associated with mental illness. The new mental health commission will develop these projects and implement them in five cities across Canada: Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Moncton.

Mental health is a significant public health issue. I applaud the government, mental health agencies and groups across Canada for their passionate and committed work. Canadians have asked their government to get involved, and that is exactly what this government has done.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC FIRST NATIONS

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a large delegation from Quebec's first nations participated in a UN session on aboriginal issues. Richard Desjardins' documentary, *The Invisible Nation*, was screened to show the living conditions in some communities.

But everyone knows that there is a need for huge investments in these communities. I remind the government that the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador presented an action plan, proposing that 10,000 jobs be created, that 10,000 young people get their diploma, and that 10,000 housing units be created over 10 years. It has not received a response from the Conservative government since it presented this action plan over a year and a half ago.

The Bloc Québécois supports these measures, and urges the government to take action. The survival of many first nations communities is at stake.

* * *

[*English*]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal circus continued its big-tent tour last week of Houdini-style magic, trying to erase its record on the auto industry.

Statements by Members

Disappearing acts cannot hide the Liberals' record of inaction on the Windsor-Detroit border, layoffs of over 3,500 employees, and bloopers and blunders on the major competitiveness issues. No acrobatics can undo their leader's approach to the big three, when he said that if the big three automakers focused on developing fuel-efficient vehicles instead of gas-guzzling SUVs, they would not be experiencing the current downsizing.

Their trick of "roll over and play dead" will not cause Canadians to forget that their policies will cost Canadians about \$2.00 per litre at the pumps.

The Liberal record is one of broken-down beaters and flat tires. That is why Canadians voted for this Conservative government that is getting results for our auto industry and its workers.

* * *

ARTHUR MUTAMBARA

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour Arthur Mutambara, a World Economic Forum young global leader, who has fought courageously for freedom and democracy in Zimbabwe.

As a student, Mr. Mutambara led anti-government protests for which he was arrested and imprisoned. After establishing himself as a leading scientist at Oxford, MIT and NASA, he returned to Africa to continue his efforts for democracy in Zimbabwe.

As leader of one of Zimbabwe's two MDC formations, Mr. Mutambara has been harassed, injured and imprisoned without charges by state authorities. Despite the risks, he remains a strong voice for unity and cooperation in Zimbabwe's pro-democracy effort.

I urge Canada and the entire global community to recognize and support his efforts.

We must condemn ZANU-PF's campaign of terror against opposition supporters. We must support democratic efforts in Zimbabwe, so that peace and security may be enjoyed by all Zimbabweans, regardless of their racial, tribal or political background.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after 18 years in the House of Commons, the Bloc introduced its 250th private member's bill, knowing full well that, for the 248th time, it will accomplish nothing.

In 18 years in Ottawa, the Bloc has had only two of its private member's bills passed, and they served only to change the names of two ridings. Bloc members cannot do anything about the major legislative priorities of their voters.

Fortunately, the Conservative government is present in Quebec, and has the desire and the means to act in Quebec's interest here in Ottawa: open federalism, fiscal balance, \$350 million for Quebec's green plan, funding for the Quebec City airport, the program for the sale of property in Mirabel, air force expansion in Quebec and the reopening of the military college in Saint Jean.

Instead of always making empty promises to Quebeckers through press releases and bills, the Bloc Québécois should admit that it is empty-handed.

* * *

● (1410)

[*English*]

OTTAWA'S ASIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I support the Asian community in Ottawa, building Chinatown's gateway on Somerset Street West. The gateway will pay tribute to Ottawa's vibrant Asian community and its cultural heritage.

To date, organizers have raised \$150,000 to support the building of the gateway. Our community is calling on the Government of Canada to support this worthwhile project. It will be an invaluable investment in the culture of our nation's capital. I invite all members of Parliament, particularly those from Ottawa, to join me in seeking federal support for this community project.

I congratulate the people behind this endeavour, members of the Ottawa Chinese gateway committee, particularly those like acting chair, Peter Yeung, co-chair Larry Lee and the executive director of Somerset BIA, Grace Xin. I want to thank Dr. David Lai, the builder of Victoria's Chinese gateway for his advice on this project.

I wish them all the best in the building of this cultural landmark to celebrate our Asian community in Ottawa.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SAINT BONIFACE

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the parish of St. Boniface will celebrate its bicentennial in 2018. Its colourful history will be well celebrated, I have no doubt, and we will acknowledge the significant contributions of Louis Riel, the church, voyageurs and, among others, the aboriginal, French, Irish, Scottish and Métis people.

This year, we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Saint Boniface. Festivities have already started with the enthusiastic launch of Célébrations 2008 and last Friday's incredible ball.

The co-chairs of Célébrations 2008, Mariette Mulaire and Normand Gousseau, assure us that this is just the start of festivities and that Manitobans will have the opportunity to celebrate this special anniversary throughout the year. The mayor of Saint Boniface at the time, Joseph Bleau—yes, I did say Jos Bleau—has resurfaced and is helping to recreate the political and cultural life of this beautiful city in 1908.

I congratulate all those volunteering at the many events and I am very proud to recognize the contribution of the City of Saint Boniface to the development of Winnipeg, Manitoba and Canada.

*Oral Questions***BROADCASTING AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to recognize the nation of Quebec is also to recognize the importance of telecommunications for this francophone nation in North America. That is one of the reasons I have introduced a bill to transfer authority for regulating broadcasting and telecommunications within Quebec to Quebec. Quebec could then have its own broadcasting and telecommunications commission. This new Quebec communications regulatory body would make it easier to broadcast regional content such as local news, because it would take into account the needs and realities of every region in Quebec. To the CRTC, Quebec is a region like any other.

Given the impact telecommunications and broadcasting have on promoting Quebec culture, the Bloc Québécois believes that this important sector needs to be regulated by Quebec.

* * *

*[English]***CHARLES CACCIA**

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise today to acknowledge the passing of a dear friend and former Liberal member of Parliament, the Hon. Charles Caccia.

Mr. Caccia was first elected to the House of Commons in 1968 to represent the riding of Davenport and was subsequently re-elected nine times, where he served as minister of labour, minister of the environment and Liberal opposition critic on environmental issues.

After leaving Parliament, he went on to serve as Senior Fellow at the Institute of the Environment at the University of Ottawa.

Mr. Caccia was more than a respected member of Parliament. He co-founded COSTI, Canada's largest immigrant service agency and was cherished and respected by his community. He was a great Liberal who dedicated his life to building a better Canada. His many accomplishments and his longstanding commitment to the people he served as an MP will not be forgotten. His passion for environmental and social justice issues was a great inspiration to all.

On behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada and our caucus, I wish to extend my sincerest sympathies to Mr. Caccia's family and friends. He will be missed.

* * *

● (1415)

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as our government continues to focus on a strong economy I thought it was time to review what the Liberal leader would do if he were in charge.

Here are his top five expenditures.

Number five, would be to spend \$1 billion on project green, a program that would do nothing for national objectives, but it would cost a fortune.

Number four, would be to spend \$5 billion on a wasteful daycare program, not on child care spaces, but on a bloated bureaucracy and interest groups.

Number three, would be to spend \$5 billion on implementing the Kyoto accord. That is how much it would cost today because they did not get it done 13 years ago.

Number two, would be to increase the GST from 5% to 7%, over \$12 billion in new taxes.

Number one, would be a new gas tax, billions of new taxes at the pumps so each and every one of us will have to pay 60% more than we are paying now.

These billions equal one thing, a Liberal deficit. One person wants to bring our country and our economy to its knees. Who is that? The person who is about to stand up.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[English]***ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the eve of World Press Freedom Day, the government took another step to limit transparency and accountability. It quietly killed the CAIRS, which allowed everyone to know what information Canadians had requested about their government through access to information.

Why did the government shut down the registry? What does it have to hide?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): In fact, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has actually widened access to information. The database in question was created by the previous Liberal government. It was called the product of a political system in which centralized control was an obsession. That is why the government got rid of it.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government said that it shut down the registry because the federal departments did not value it. Why would they? Obviously they would say that. Instead of them, the government should have consulted the clients of the database who were using it everyday: researchers, MPs, journalists, ordinary Canadians.

Once again, why did the government shut down the registry? What does it have to hide?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do wider access to information than ever before.

The previous government created a centralized registry in order to control the flow of information. It was deemed expensive and it was deemed to slow down the access to information. That is why this government got rid of it. I am not surprised the hon. member likes a centralized system.

[Translation]

He is and continues to be a centralizer.

Oral Questions

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's response is pathetic. The registry made it possible to know who asked for what through access to information. It was useful. This is the most secretive government in the history of our country; it keeps secrets and covers things up.

How far will the Prime Minister go to hide the truth from Canadians?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has actually widened access to information. That is the opposite of the former government, which created this costly registry to slow down the access to information system. The registry was, and I quote, "the product of a political system in which centralized control is an obsession".

That is why this government shut down the registry.

• (1420)

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has not explained why Canadians cannot see a registry that contains requests for information by citizens of government. There is no answer at all on that side, and its record on information is terrible.

Information complaints are at an all time high, numbers not seen since the last Conservative government. Departments are receiving failing grades from the information commissioner. Now the government wants to do away with a key database that provides information to Canadians.

Why is a government that ran on accountability running away from it?

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know all about the opposite party, when it was in government, wanting to control the access to information.

Here is what a leading expert on access to information law said about CAIRS in 2003. Alasdair Roberts said:

No other country maintains a government-wide database like CAIRS. CAIRS is the product of a political system in which centralized control is an obsession.

That is what the opposite party wished to do.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the words just quoted are the best description of that government than I have ever heard.

[*Translation*]

Over the weekend, the government shut down the electronic database where citizens could examine the government's internal affairs. That goes against the spirit of democracy.

Does the Prime Minister think, like Louis XIV, that "I am the state"?

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the first time Canadians can see how their taxes are being spent by the CBC, by the Wheat Board and by Canada Post. The Liberals were never willing to be honest about the release of this information. They consistently opposed it for farmers in western Canada as money was being spent. They opposed that. This

government is opening up the books so that in fact the farmers of western Canada can see what is being done with their money.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ELECTIONS CANADA

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport, the Conservative Party's political lieutenant for Quebec, says that he was not told about the strategy his party used during the last election campaign. Yet it was his party's high-ranking officials, including Susan Kehoe, the chief financial officer during the last campaign, and Michael Donison, the party's executive director at the time, who set up this procedure to get around the election spending limits authorized by Elections Canada.

Can the Prime Minister tell us when his party's brass told him about this strategy?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the so-called in and out method has been around for a long time. That is what it is called when the party transfers funds to riding associations so that they can buy services from the national party. During the 2006 elections, the Bloc transferred over \$700,000 to its candidates, and billed them for that same amount.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Elections Canada is not investigating the Bloc; it is investigating the Conservative Party. Elections Canada did not search Bloc headquarters; it searched Conservative Party headquarters. Rather than distort reality, the Prime Minister should either accuse the Bloc outright or quit making false statements.

Until that happens, is the Prime Minister, who likes controlling everything—judges, senior public servants, officers of Parliament—telling us that he was not informed of what was going on in his very own party? Is that what the Prime Minister is telling us?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois is the one who went to the courts to force his own candidates to participate in the so-called in and out scheme. The courts supported this practice against the wishes of Elections Canada. We are following the precedents set by the Bloc leader, the father of the in and out method.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, these are more false statements to try to divert attention, but let us return to the case at hand. The Minister of Transport, who was the political lieutenant for Quebec during the most recent election, claims he does not know how advertising money was allocated. Yet the minister received an email from Mike Donison in December 2005.

Does the minister realize that by pleading ignorance, he is in all likelihood providing new evidence of the Conservatives' disregard for the truth?

Oral Questions

•(1425)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have here the election campaign report for the Bloc candidate in Pontiac, the riding the hon. member was referring to. This report indicates that as of January 1, a total of \$17,800 had been transferred to the local Bloc candidate. On May 4, the candidate returned \$17,720 to the Bloc to pay for advertising, according to Elections Canada. That is why we call the hon. member the son of in and out.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, why was the Bloc reimbursed in Pontiac? Why was the Bloc not investigated in Pontiac? It is the Conservatives who are under investigation. Using the in and out scheme, the minister transferred only \$6,100, while the other Conservatives in the Outaouais transferred \$45,000.

Does this not confirm that this entire scheme was orchestrated at the national level, here in Ottawa, to receive funding—

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member would like to know why Elections Canada has chosen to investigate a method that is the same as the other method. We would like to know the same thing. “During an election campaign, the candidates pay collectively for national expenses.” That quote from the Bloc whip comes from the December 22, 2001 edition of *Le Soleil*. That is why we call the Bloc leader “the father of in and out”.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the saga of the in and out scandal continues. We are learning the facts little by little. For instance, *Le Devoir* explains how the Conservatives used that money to cheat. Conservative decision makers used that money to break the law and exceed the limits, to cheat. The *Winnipeg Free Press* has reported other allegations concerning questionable transfers for polling.

Does the Prime Minister realize that the more he denies the evidence, the more Canadians are losing faith in their government? Does he not understand this?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly, all the parties have been engaging in the same practices, as permitted by the law, for some time now. The former national campaign manager for the NDP said the same thing. He said that the NDP did the same thing. L. Ian MacDonald asked Robin Sears:

[*English*]

“You’ve done it yourself with the NDP, right?”

[*Translation*]

And he answered, “Absolutely”.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that man is Mr. Mulroney’s spokesperson. Okay.

[*English*]

The Canadian people are losing trust in the Conservatives. When we boil it down, it is because the Conservatives do not trust Canadians.

Let us just consider what has been happening. The Conservatives committed to expand access to information. Instead, they shut down the registry.

They promised more openness in government, yet what do we see? They are burying the scientific evidence of their own government on everything from climate change to HIV.

They said they would have accountability and now we have the Prime Minister authorizing in and out.

Why do the Conservatives keep burying their promises here—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member once again talks about access to information. There was a centralized registry that was criticized as a centralized tool of control over access to information. That is what this government got rid of.

What this government brought in was access to information for the Canadian Wheat Board, for the CBC and for dozens of other agencies and crown corporations. We did that in spite of the fact the opposition parties did not want us to.

•(1430)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities was the prime minister’s Quebec lieutenant during the last election. Last week, he feigned ignorance when asked how the ridings were chosen and how the money from the in and out scandal was allocated. The search warrant document has made public certain emails addressed to the minister regarding this scheme.

Does the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities still maintain his ignorance, now that those emails are public?

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to Elections Canada, on July 27, 2004, Marlene Catterall, the Liberal candidate in Ottawa West—Nepean, cashed a cheque from the Liberal Party of Canada for \$3,300. On August 18, 2004, the Liberal Party of Canada cashed a cheque from Marlene Catterall’s local campaign for—let us guess—\$3,300. That was \$3,300 in and \$3,300 out: in, out, legal. If it is legal for them, it is legal for us.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the last election, the Conservative head office decided it wanted to spend \$800,000 in extra dollars for advertising in Quebec that should have been declared as national expenses, but it decided to hide it as local expenses. A December 19, 2005 email confirms that the Minister of Transport decided which ridings would participate in this in and out scheme.

Oral Questions

How can the Minister of Transport now plead ignorance?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to Elections Canada, on July 26, 2004, the Liberal Party of Canada, national, sent a cheque cashed by the local campaign of Aileen Carroll. Then, on August 6, 2004, only 10 days later, the Liberal Party of Canada then cashed a cheque from Ms. Carroll for exactly the same number of dollars: \$5,000 in, \$5,000 out. In, out, it was legal for them. It must therefore be legal for our party.

* * *

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has cut the court challenges program, cut funding to aboriginal groups, women, literacy, people with disabilities, the poor, and cut off the voices of his own caucus, his own cabinet. His message to them, to the country, is that there is one voice that counts and that is his.

To the Prime Minister: Why is his voice the only one that matters?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, oddly the Prime Minister is not answering this question. Someone else is because his is not the only voice that matters. The voices that matter most to the Prime Minister are the voices of Canadians; the voices of Canadians who told us they had enough of unaccountable Liberals in office, lining their pockets and their party pockets at the expense of taxpayers.

They had enough of that. They had enough of a party that spent all its time figuring out new, clever ways to raise taxes and increase spending on behalf of their vested interests.

They wanted someone standing up to talk for them, cutting taxes for them, not someone who ran around the country as their leader did two weeks ago talking about how raising gas taxes was going to help ordinary Canadians.

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the scripts they write for their own open-line callers and the plastic cards their caucus has to carry around with them, how humiliating. One voice, only his.

But silencing all the voices around him means there are no other voices to say this is wrong. This is trying to buy a vote to bring down a government. This is unlevelling a playing field that must be level. This is when there is a Cadman affair and an in and out scheme.

To the Prime Minister: Why is his voice the only one that counts?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the recent Conservative voices count for more in this government than any other. It is because the Liberal leader there has silenced the voices of the Liberal Party. In this session of Parliament, over a quarter of the time he has told his members of Parliament they cannot stand up and vote on behalf of their constituents. That is called silencing the voices of his members.

Conservatives come here and they speak on behalf of their constituents, and they vote. They vote again and again for lower taxes, and action on crime. They are voting for real Canadians.

● (1435)

[*Translation*]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this government wants to control everything, from which movies we watch to which brochures we read. And now, since the first of April, they have stopped updating the system for coordination of access to information requests, an important tool in obtaining information on how this government operates.

If it is not in order to govern away from prying eyes, why then did this Conservative government kill this wonderful tool of democracy? Is this the transparency promised by the Conservatives during the election campaign?

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a leading expert on access to information law said this about the Liberal CAIRS program in 2003:

No other country maintains a government-wide database like CAIRS. CAIRS is the product of a political system in which centralized control is an obsession.

That is not the way of this government. That is the way of the Liberals. That is the way of the Bloc and the way of the NDP. This government is committed to open information as we did with the CBC, and as we did with the Wheat Board and Canada Post.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is not an answer.

The Prime Minister, in his secretive and controlling way, has decided that requests for access to information must go through the Privy Council from now on. This is reminiscent of what the Conservatives did with the gun registry. It is their way of getting in their cheap shots—quietly and without public debate. The Conservatives have made this decision for a very specific reason—they want to hide information from the public.

Will the government immediately reinstate the system for coordination of access to information requests?

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why would we reinstate a program that blocks access to information, that centralizes control? For the first time, over the objections of the Liberals, Canadians can see how their taxes are being used and spent by the CBC, by the Wheat Board and by Canada Post. The Liberals were never willing to relinquish that central control. We are.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in keeping with its decision to no longer support non-profit economic organizations, the federal government has decided to stop funding Montreal International, which also receives funding from the Government of Quebec, the City of Montreal and the private sector, and whose mission is to attract foreign investment and support the development of targeted sectors.

Does the minister responsible for the economic development for the regions of Quebec plan on reconsidering his decision, as called for by the Quebec minister of economic development, innovation and export, Raymond Bachand, who has said that it is based purely on ideology?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Montreal International is an organization that has been financed for several years by Economic Development Canada and other partners. We clearly indicated to the organization that we now wish to fund one-off projects with measurable results.

Nevertheless, we are taking a very civil approach. We advised Montreal International to submit a transition plan so that after March 31, 2010, it will be self-sustaining.

* * *

QUEBEC CITY ARMOURY

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on May 3, the federal government issued a call for tenders to relocate the occupants of the Quebec City armoury, home of Les Voltigeurs, for a period of 10 years as of June 2008. But on April 12, this period was indicated to be three years.

Could the minister responsible for the Quebec City region tell us whether this means that the government has decided not to rebuild the armoury or that it has secretly come up with a new purpose for it?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The member is obviously behind in the news, because this was reported in *Le Soleil* on the weekend.

The Minister of National Defence issued a call for tenders because of the number of people affected. This does not call into question the rebuilding of the armoury.

* * *

• (1440)

[English]

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal government often disagrees with provincial governments on policies, but especially at a time of hemorrhaging manufacturing jobs, it is unacceptable and unprecedented for Canada's finance minister to tell the world that Ontario is the last place to invest. When even the premier of Newfoundland and Labrador is now promising to stand up for Ontario and also to move

forward with his anyone but Conservative campaign, why can the minister not stop trashing the business climate of Ontario?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the member for Markham—Unionville, disregarding the facts, attacked me, my wife and our children. His remarks were defamatory and we are awaiting his apology.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would recommend a little collegiality in this House, and on the matter of that school, my questions are very simple. Is there now or was there ever in the past any ownership by the minister or anyone in his family? Was there anything in his budget that potentially or actually supported that school? If so, why did he not recuse himself from the budget?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has been a longtime supporter of helping developmentally disabled people in this country. He is someone who has done more to help the disadvantaged with developmental disabilities than the Liberal government ever did. The lies and smears that we hear from that side of the House are simply unacceptable. The member should do the right thing, he should apologize and he should do it immediately.

* * *

[Translation]

MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, instead of worrying about the Constitution, the Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec should worry about his own affairs and make sure that Quebec's economy also is stimulated in Montreal. This stupid decision to cut funding to Montreal International and other not for profit organizations will have disastrous repercussions on Montreal's economy and on all the regions of Quebec.

First it was Ontario, and now it seems to be our turn. What does the minister have against Montreal?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to support economic organizations, but we are supporting one-off projects and no longer providing recurring funding.

Montreal International has received \$66 million from Canada Economic Development over the past 10 years. We expect Montreal International to present us with a transition plan. In two years, effective March 31, 2010, it should be self-sufficient and drawing its support from its community.

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, imagine, we are dealing with an armchair constitutional scholar like the CED minister and with a senator who is an expert at closing things down and who does not have the Prime Minister's ear when it comes to representing the interests of Montreal in cabinet.

Oral Questions

The partnership between the federal government and Montreal International is an unprecedented success. This organization has attracted almost \$6 billion in investments over 12 years. That is \$6 billion for Montreal. The World Anti-Doping Agency is a good example. What does this cost the federal government? It costs \$2 million a year. The minister is alone in his thinking.

When will the minister announce that he will renew funding for Montreal International?

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 contract we have with Montreal International ended on December 31, 2007. People there know full well that they have to present us with a transition plan.

Furthermore, every economic organization that has presented us with a serious and credible transition plan has had its projects approved. We expect the same thing from Montreal International.

* * *

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, media reports over the weekend suggested the government was proposing changes requiring all federal skilled worker applicants to submit the results of a French or English language proficiency test.

Could the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration clarify what this means for skilled workers applying to come to Canada?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we value the contribution that newcomers have made in building Canada. We want more newcomers to come here. We want more to be reunited with their families and more to become successful Canadians.

That is why these are proposals only. They are presented in the *Canada Gazette* for a 30 day period to ensure public consultation. If it becomes clear that they might place additional burdens on applicants, then we will not proceed with them.

However, rest assured, our government will always ensure that immigrants who want to come to Canada are treated fairly and equally.

* * *

●(1445)

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the exemption that allows Insite to operate is set to expire June 30. Again and again, the government has delayed a decision on this important facility, saying more research needs to be done.

The research has been done and it is absolutely clear. More than 20 studies have demonstrated the health, safety and cost benefits of Insite. This morning, the criminologist hired by the government said that Insite contributed to public order and saves lives.

When will the government listen to the evidence and extend Insite's permit to operate?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the extension ends on June 30 and the government will make a decision before that time.

However, I was very pleased to be with the justice minister and the public safety minister last week, when we announced \$111 million to help individuals addicted to illicit and unhealthy drugs and for prevention purposes as well, to ensure our kids get the message that these drugs are unsafe.

That is the kind of government we have in Canada now, a government that cares about addicts and cares about those who would otherwise be twisted on to these very dangerous drugs.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, leading researchers from UBC condemned the government's interference in research on Insite. The only response from the government was that the decision on Insite would not be based on scientific evidence alone.

If the Conservative government is not making its decisions based on evidence, then what on earth is it basing it on?

What exactly is the government so desperately seeking that was not covered in more than 20 studies? What is it so afraid of in dealing with the scientific evidence before it?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it unusual for the hon. member to make that allegation.

We are the government that actually wants more research and has commissioned more research. We want to ensure this decision is the right decision for Canada, for addicts and for the community in Vancouver.

That is the decision we have made, more research and more consideration. That is because we are open-minded and we want to make the best decision for Canada and Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs and pertains to the case of Mr. Abdelrazik, a Canadian citizen who remains in Khartoum and who does not have a passport.

I would like to ask the minister what he will do to ensure the return of Mr. Abdelrazik to Canada.

Oral Questions

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said last week to my hon. colleague, we are currently assessing Mr. Abdelrazik's situation. What I can say is that Mr. Abdelrazik has the benefit of full consular assistance. We are providing medical support and have helped him communicate with his family and his lawyer. As we all know, he has sought temporary refuge at the embassy.

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can only assume that Mr. Abdelrazik does not pose a security threat because both his parliamentary secretary and his chief of staff met with Mr. Abdelrazik when they were in Khartoum. So if he is not a security threat and the minister has said he should not be on a list, I would like to ask the minister this. Mr. Abdelrazik cannot get access to a passport. It is all very well to say we are giving him refuge, but he wants to come back to Canada. The minister knows perfectly well that Mr. Abdelrazik's future lies in his hands and in the hands of the Government of Canada. What are you going to do to make sure that Mr. Abdelrazik can come home to his country?

The Speaker: I am sure the question was addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can say to the former NDP leader that Mr. Abdelrazik is temporarily unable to return to Canada because he is on the UN list of terrorists suspected of being affiliated with al Qaeda, the Taliban or even Osama bin Laden.

* * *

[English]

BURMA

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, death tolls in Burma from Saturday's tragic cyclone may now exceed 10,000. Those left homeless probably number in the hundreds of thousands. Getting assistance to the Burmese people is made more challenging by the repressive military dictatorship.

Will the government commit to work with the Red Cross and other appropriate relief agencies to ensure that sufficient aid reaches directly the people most affected? Will the government announce this aid this afternoon when it presents Aung San Suu Kyi's Canadian citizenship to Prime Minister Sein Win?

• (1450)

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, our government expresses condolences to the families and friends of the deceased and concern for all who were affected.

CIDA will respond by setting aside \$2 million to support international humanitarian organizations such as the UN, the International Red Cross and the World Food Program.

We have just received word that the UN has negotiated access with the government of Myanmar. We call upon the government of Myanmar to allow access to other international humanitarian organizations and to allow for an effective aid operation.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not call it Myanmar; I call it Burma, as the people call it.

To help the stricken people of Burma on this tragic day, will the Prime Minister meet with Prime Minister Sein Win this afternoon? Will the Government of Canada commit to hosting a Burmese MP union meeting in Ottawa this year? Will CIDA provide the million dollar shortfall in food aid to Burmese refugees, over and above what the minister just announced, that occurred even before the cyclone?

How will the Canadian government assure that the assistance the minister just announced goes directly to the people?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we have set aside \$2 million to help in the international effort. We will provide that money to the international organizations that are allowed access into the country to help those who are affected.

We will urge the government to allow international organizations to proceed with an effective aid operation so that this challenge can be addressed and the people's suffering can be reduced.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even though the government is about to confer honorary Canadian citizenship on Aung San Suu Kyi to show its support for those opposing the Burmese regime, the government is incapable of keeping its own promises by ensuring that the embargo that it imposed against that regime is effective.

What concrete measures does the Minister of Foreign Affairs intend to take to ensure that the embargo is respected by Canadian businesses?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the sanctions we imposed on the military junta are the strictest in the world. We are doing this to ensure that this regime changes. We want the people of Burma to have a democratic regime in the near future, one that shows respect for human rights and dignity.

With regard to the measures taken through our sanctions, they are very strict and people who do not obey them could be sentenced to as much as five years in prison.

* * *

OLYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with the apparel industry in Quebec in crisis, the best those in charge of the Olympic uniforms for the Canadian delegation in Beijing could come up with was to have those garments made in China. What a way to encourage a suffering industry. What a show of indifference from the Conservatives in the face of the manufacturing industry crisis.

Does the government intend to correct the situation and ensure that Canada's Olympic athletes will be wearing clothing made here?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is an example of the ineffective presence of the Bloc in the House of Commons?

This was a decision made in 2004 by Vanoc, the Canadian Olympic Committee. We see that the Bloc members in this House were completely ineffective in that process. This is a decision into which the Canadian athletes have had some input. It was not a government decision.

* * *

*[Translation]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, my riding experienced record-breaking floods. On January 1, 2008, the federal government determined that no assistance would be available for vacation homes under the federal disaster financial assistance program.

Can the Prime Minister guarantee to my constituents that the federal government will immediately provide compensation for damage to their second homes, that non-profit organizations and municipalities will also be fully compensated for expenses related to flooding and that volunteer firefighters and volunteer emergency workers will be compensated for lost income?

• (1455)

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is closely monitoring the flood situation in New Brunswick through the Government Operations Centre.

The Province of New Brunswick has made an official request for financial assistance available through the disaster financial assistance arrangements. There are eligibility requirements that will be covered here and we will continue to work with the Province of New Brunswick.

* * *

BURMA

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, following the commitment made in the Speech from the Throne, the House passed a motion on October 17 conferring honouring Canadian citizenship on Aung San Suu Kyi in recognition of her struggle to bring freedom and democracy to the people of Burma.

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs update the House on what the government is doing to implement this motion?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that later today I will present a certificate of honorary citizenship to Aung San Suu Kyi's cousin, Dr. Sein Win, who will accept this honour on her behalf.

This government will continue to stand alongside those who, like Aung San Suu Kyi, stand up for democracy, for human rights, the rule of law and for all the people of Burma.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to start off, I just want to pass on our condolences, and our thoughts are with the people of Burma after the horrific cyclone on the weekend.

The real leader of Burma is Aung San Suu Kyi. One of the things we were trying to get the government to do is to bring in tough sanctions. I just heard the minister get on his feet and say that they were tough.

However, the NDP has documents here showing that when the question was posed on how the minister and the government could determine whether the sanctions were working, they replied that there was no requirement by companies to advise us of their investments in Burma.

What is this? It is a paper tiger. We have no action. What is the government going to do about real sanctions on Burma?

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, these sanctions are the strictest in the world, and I invite the international community to follow Canada's lead and impose sanctions as severe as Canada's. These sanctions are proof of our government's commitment to promoting freedom, promoting human rights, and promoting the rule of law around the world, and especially in Burma.

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the saying goes, "there is no there there" when it comes to tough sanctions from the government.

The Canada pension plan holds more than \$1 billion worth of shares with companies linked to Burma.

[Translation]

The government has admitted that sanctions have a very limited impact, and merely affect future investment. The government has no way of knowing whether investments are being made in Burma.

Will the minister finally act? When will he put a stop to Canadian investments in Burma?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on December 14, we took action by imposing the strictest sanctions in the world. I wish that my colleague could do something, as we are doing, to change the regime, to get the military junta out of Burma, and to help give the people a democracy that respects the rule of law and human dignity.

That is what we are doing. We have taken a leadership role in doing this, and we invite the international community to do what we are doing and impose the strictest possible sanctions on that regime.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were horrified by the gruesome deaths of 500 ducks at Syncrude tailings pond. This type of ecological disaster will only happen more often as Alberta's oil sands develop beyond control.

The president of Syncrude describes the Prime Minister as a very good supporter of the oil sands.

Will the Prime Minister become a very good supporter of the planet and commit today to using his government's authority under the Migratory Birds Convention Act to immediately prosecute this crime and any future incidents of this kind?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we take this issue tremendously seriously. Officials from Environment Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service were on the scene to provide support. An investigation is going forward to investigate any illegal offences which may have occurred.

Thanks to this government, we have brought in more financial resources to support environmental enforcement, something that was lacking.

While I am on my feet I could ask the member opposite a question. Does she not agree that it is unacceptable to dump raw sewage into the Pacific Ocean like she did when she was minister of the environment in British Columbia?

* * *

● (1500)

CANADIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know it was asked by the Bloc but I would like to get some further clarity on the question with regard to the Canadian athletes and their clothing. It was brought to my attention, too, that these were being manufactured in China as opposed to right here in Canada.

For additional clarity, would the Secretary of State for Sport tell us whether the government agrees with the decision made by the Canadian Olympic Committee?

Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. We do not agree with the decision. We would have preferred that the clothing be made in Canada. The decision on our Olympic athletes' clothing is made by Vanoc and by the COC. They are private, independent bodies.

It is important to remind the House that this was a decision made in 2004 when there was a Liberal government. The Liberal government did not complain. It did not do anything. Why? Because it is very clear that this is a decision that is made under business operations of the Canadian Olympic Committee.

[Translation]

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, citizens who live in our regions are sick and tired of breaking the bank every time they fill up the tank. They have no choice but to use their cars to get around. The government does not set the price of gas, but it is responsible for helping people become less dependent on oil.

In rural regions like mine, public transit is virtually non-existent, and consumers can hardly be blamed for feeling that they have been taken hostage.

Will the government do more to help municipalities in the regions quickly set up the infrastructure they need to reduce oil dependency? [English]

Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we understand the burden that the high price of gas is putting on families and that is why we have taken action. We have reduced the GST. We are actually giving some of the gas tax funding back to those municipalities.

However, the reality is that the price of gasoline is set by international market forces, something over which we have no control.

However, we are committed to reducing taxes, unlike the Liberals, who will not only raise the GST and raise taxes, but have uncontrolled government spending plans. In fact, for every percentage cut in the GST, they have umpteen plans that will put us back—

The Speaker: Order, please. Tabling of documents.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

● (1505)

CANADA-EFTA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-55, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the States of the European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland), the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Republic of Iceland, the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Kingdom of Norway and the Agreement on Agriculture between Canada and the Swiss Confederation.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

In accordance with the order of reference of Monday, December 10, 2007, the committee has considered Bill C-30, the specific claims tribunal act, and has agreed to report it with amendment.

* * *

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand that there is a situation within the parliamentary precinct because of a lack of water in the downtown area. I am told that this is anticipated to continue for some time.

Routine Proceedings

The Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Commons has advised me that, in his opinion, the situation represents a health and safety risk.

Therefore, I ask for unanimous consent for the following House order. I move:

That the notice paper close at four o'clock today, that all committee meetings be cancelled for today and that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

(The House adjourned at 3:07 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, May 5, 2008

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Food and Drugs Act

Bill C-517. Second reading	5423
Mr. Merrifield	5423
Ms. Folco	5424
Mr. Dewar	5426
Mr. Bigras	5427
Mr. Bezan	5428
Mr. Easter	5429
Mr. Perron	5430
Division on motion deferred	5431

Points of Order

Bill C-5—Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act

Mr. Anderson	5431
--------------------	------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canada Marine Act

Bill C-23. Third reading	5432
Mr. Bagnell	5432
Mr. Volpe	5434
Ms. Chow	5435
Mr. Jean	5437
Mr. Volpe	5438
Mr. Volpe	5438
Mr. Dewar	5440
Mr. McKay	5441
Division on motion deferred	5442

Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act

Bill C-5. Report stage	5442
------------------------------	------

Speaker's Ruling

The Deputy Speaker	5442
--------------------------	------

Motions in Amendment

Mr. Bevington	5442
Motions No. 1 to 9, 11 and 12, 16 to 18 and 21	5442
Mr. Dewar	5443
Mr. Alghabra	5444

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Clement Bowman

Mrs. Davidson	5445
---------------------	------

National Youth Week

Ms. Sgro	5445
----------------	------

Maskinongé Business Awards Evening

Mr. André	5445
-----------------	------

Housing

Ms. Savoie	5445
------------------	------

Battle of the Atlantic

Mr. Keddy	5446
-----------------	------

National Elizabeth Fry Week

Ms. Brown (Oakville)	5446
----------------------------	------

Mental Health

Mr. Brown (Barrie)	5446
--------------------------	------

Quebec First Nations

Mr. Lemay	5446
-----------------	------

Automotive Industry

Mr. Carrie	5446
------------------	------

Arthur Mutambara

Mr. Brison	5447
------------------	------

Bloc Québécois

Mr. Petit	5447
-----------------	------

Ottawa's Asian Community

Mr. Dewar	5447
-----------------	------

Saint Boniface

Mr. Simard	5447
------------------	------

Broadcasting and Telecommunications

Mr. Laforest	5448
--------------------	------

Charles Caccia

Ms. Minna	5448
-----------------	------

Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada

Mr. Dykstra	5448
-------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Access to Information

Mr. Dion	5448
Mr. Harper	5448
Mr. Dion	5448
Mr. Harper	5448
Mr. Dion	5449
Mr. Harper	5449
Mr. Ignatieff	5449
Mr. Toews	5449
Mr. Ignatieff	5449
Mr. Toews	5449

Elections Canada

Mr. Duceppe	5449
Mr. Harper	5449
Mr. Duceppe	5449
Mr. Harper	5449
Mr. Guimond	5449
Mr. Poilievre	5450
Mr. Guimond	5450
Mr. Poilievre	5450
Mr. Layton	5450
Mr. Harper	5450
Mr. Layton	5450
Mr. Harper	5450

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste-lettre

**1782711
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:
Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

*En case de non-livraison,
retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :*
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :**
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

**Additional copies may be obtained from Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: (613) 941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: (613) 954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@pwgsc.gc.ca
<http://publications.gc.ca>**

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.

**On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires ou la version française de cette publication en écrivant à : Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : (613) 941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : (613) 954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc.gc.ca
<http://publications.gc.ca>**