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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, September 14, 2009**

—  
**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, September 14, 2009

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1105)

[*English*]

### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ)** moved that C-308, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (improvement of the employment insurance system) be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On June 2 you made a statement with respect to the management of private members' business. In particular, you raised concerns about three bills that appear to impinge upon the financial prerogative of the Crown and invited the comments of members of the House.

One of the three bills you mentioned was Bill C-308, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (improvement of the employment insurance system). Without commenting on the merits of the bill, I submit that Bill C-308 contains provisions that would change the purposes of the Employment Insurance Act, would require new spending and would, therefore, require a royal recommendation.

Bill C-308 includes the following provisions that would require new government spending.

First, Bill C-308 would reduce the qualifying period for employment insurance to a minimum of 360 hours of work compared with the current variable interest requirement, which varies from 420 to 700 hours, depending upon the unemployment rate of the region.

Second, Bill C-308 would permanently increase the benefit period by five weeks.

Third, Bill C-308 would increase the benefit replacement rate to 60% of insured earnings from the current rate of 55%. The bill also proposes to change the benefit calculation from the best 14 weeks of a claimant's earnings during a 52-week period to the best 12 weeks of a claimant's earnings during a 52-week period.

Fourth, Bill C-308 would increase the level of maximum yearly insurable earnings from \$39,000 to \$42,500. It would also introduce an indexing formula that would further increase the level of maximum yearly insurable earnings every year.

Finally, Bill C-308 would add a new part to the Employment Insurance Act to expand benefits for self-employed persons.

The Department of Human Resources and Skills Development estimates that the measures contained in Bill C-308 would cost as much as \$4.3 billion per year.

Mr. Speaker, in previous rulings, you have ruled that other private members' bills on employment insurance were out of order because they would increase government spending and therefore require a royal recommendation. In particular, I would draw the attention of members to a November 6, 2006 ruling on Bill C-269, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (improvement of the employment insurance system), where the Speaker stated that Bill C-269 would reduce

the qualifying period for benefits...increases the weekly benefit rate...repeals the waiting period for benefits...increases the yearly maximum insurable earnings and...extends coverage of the Employment Insurance Plan to the self-employed. ... I have concluded that all of these elements would indeed require expenditures from the EI Account which are not currently authorized. I note as well that the summary of the bill lists three further ends which, at first glance, appear to me to involve other increases to expenditures. Such increased spending is not covered by the terms of any existing appropriation.

I must rule that...Bill C-269 requires a royal recommendation.

Bill C-308 includes provisions similar to those in Bill C-269 from the 39th Parliament, which was found to require a royal recommendation. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I submit that Bill C-308 must also be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas wish to comment on that point of order?

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** No, Mr. Speaker, I do not. We will invoke our right of reply another time because this morning we are just getting started with the debate on Bill C-308.

If we may, we will address the government's claims later on.

•(1110)

What a happy coincidence that we are debating Bill C-308, employment insurance reform, as the session begins. As everyone knows, people have been talking about this issue all summer and even earlier this year.

*Private Members' Business*

Before I begin, I would like to salute the people of my riding, who are celebrating the 400th anniversary of Champlain's arrival in the Chambly-Borduas area via the Richelieu River. This summer was full of festivities marking the event.

I would also like to salute my House of Commons colleagues, and I hope that we can get off to a positive start this session.

This summer, people were talking about a 360-hour provision for employment insurance benefits. We believe that this is only part of the solution to the problems plaguing employment insurance. It is time for a comprehensive overhaul of the employment insurance system, and that is why we have tabled Bill C-308.

This bill includes a number of changes to the current system, including reducing the qualifying period to 360 hours—I will discuss costs related to these measures shortly; increasing the benefit period, which is currently 45 weeks but has been temporarily increased to 50 weeks—we believe that should be a permanent change; and increasing the weekly benefit rate to 60% from 55%.

For those who did not tune into this debate the first time around, I want to point out that this bill would eliminate the presumption that persons related to one other do not deal with each other at arm's length. Right now, people working for an employer who is also a relative must prove that they have an arm's-length relationship with company administration.

I would also note that a temporary measure was recently brought in to increase the maximum insurable earnings to \$41,500. We believe that this measure should be permanent. This bill would also enable self-employed workers to qualify for employment insurance benefits.

That is an overview of the measures in Bill C-308.

Some will focus on the other measures that are not in the bill. But we have planned separate initiatives, and we have not neglected these measures, such as the waiting period, the abolition of the two-week waiting period, which is being examined in Bill C-241, introduced by my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi.

In addition, regarding the increase in the number of weeks for individuals who are on extended leave because of a serious illness, epidemic or quarantine, we would like to increase the number of weeks from 15 to 50. This bill was introduced by my colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, who has left this House, but the bill was saved by a motion from the House Leader of the Bloc Québécois, the member for Joliette, so that it can be put to a vote in the House.

Motion M-285, moved by my colleague from Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, would reinstate a program for older worker adjustment, for which the provinces would provide 30% of the funding and the federal government would provide 70%. This would ensure that those aged 55 and up who are not able to find new jobs receive an income until they reach the official retirement age, when they will receive income security.

• (1115)

The fourth additional measure is addressed in Bill C-395, introduced by our colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé. This bill

would protect workers who are affected by a prolonged labour dispute—more than 103 weeks—and would ensure that these workers, who have often been paying into employment insurance for 25, 30 or 40 years, are eligible for EI benefits when their employer shuts down the company after the 103 weeks. These are the other measures we have planned in addition to Bill C-308.

Since this time last year, we now have 500,000 more unemployed workers, including 70,000 in Quebec. Nothing has been done to help these people, although we are aware of all of the problems with the current system, which already excluded nearly 60% of unemployed workers from the possibility of receiving employment insurance benefits. We all saw the show put on by the Liberal-Conservative coalition this summer about the 360 hours. In a heartfelt speech, the member for Bourassa told us in June, here in this House, that if the Conservatives did nothing, it meant they were abandoning the workers and that these workers would starve. To ensure that this would happen, the coalition set up a bogus working group that has been recognized as such and that has produced bogus results.

Today, we need to debate this issue in this House. Are the parliamentarians here aware of the problems the crisis is causing for people who lose their jobs? These are problems faced by all the families who have seen their income drop because of job losses. The crisis also means a substantial shortfall for the regional economy. Many of these people will soon be dependent on provincial programs. Quebec, of course, has programs to help people in need.

The show we witnessed this summer is a non-starter. No one from the government or the official opposition is willing to say that they are going to stand up for the unemployed and correct the situation. The department's own figures show that in 1990, nearly 84%—83.82%—of people who lost their jobs could expect to receive employment insurance benefits. Today, 46% of people can expect to receive these benefits. This means that 50% of people have been deliberately excluded. The Liberals, followed by the Conservatives, created this economic tragedy for the unemployed, while managing to produce an EI surplus of between \$3 billion and \$7 billion year after year.

In the past 12 or 13 years, \$57 billion has been diverted from the employment insurance fund.

• (1120)

Where will the money come from to pay for the improvements to the system? From worker and employer contributions. Instead of using this money for other purposes, the government should have put it toward the fund's stated objectives.

*Private Members' Business*

This opinion was shared by all the members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. I would remind this House that just four years ago, in February 2005, that committee made 28 recommendations to the House of Commons, in keeping with its terms of reference. The first eight of those 28 recommendations were unanimous. In other words, the four parties in the House of Commons represented on that committee had unanimously agreed to recommend that an independent employment insurance fund be created to prevent the government from dipping further into the fund. The committee recommended that the fund be used only to cover the costs of employment insurance. It also recommended that the money that had been diverted be transferred gradually to the employment insurance fund, as the Auditor General had called for. The committee further recommended creating a premium rate stabilization reserve, to provide for sudden increases in the number of unemployed workers; introducing a mechanism to stabilize premium rates; giving the government the power to set a statutory rate and implementing a \$3,000 yearly basic insurable earnings exemption.

These recommendations were all unanimous. I would also remind the House that all three current opposition parties—the Liberal Party, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP—also unanimously recommended amendments that correspond exactly to Bill C-308. It will be interesting to see if the Liberals support that, if this time, they will remain true to the work they did with other members of the House, and if they will support their own recommendations in the House of Commons.

These amendments are: a permanent, rather than temporary, maximum duration of regular benefits of 50 weeks; that is, extending benefits by five weeks. We no longer hear the Liberals talking about that; now it is the Conservatives. At that time, the Conservatives also voted in favour of calculating benefits based on the 12 best weeks. The amendments also provided for an increase in the rate of benefits from 55% to 60% of earnings between periods. Once again, the Liberals agreed with us. The other measures included allowing self-employed workers access to the EI system, removing the arm's-length relationship—this is all included in Bill C-308—and eliminating the waiting period for those engaged in approved training.

We are very curious to see how our colleagues will vote. Of course, we encourage them to vote in favour of the bill as it was introduced, which would allow them to honour their commitment in this House. The Conservatives also voted for some of these measures back when they were in opposition.

As a final point, one might wonder whether the money is there. Yes, it is there. The cost is not as high as the Conservatives are claiming. We saw that in relation to the 360 hours. This measure will not cost \$4.5 billion, as the Conservatives would have us believe.

• (1125)

The Parliamentary Budget Officer did an approximate calculation and estimated the cost at \$1.2 billion.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for introducing his bill, a bill which I think all three opposition parties have supported in whole or in part for a long time.

It is the government that has been resistant, although it appears now that it is prepared to come forward with some relief, which I think is helpful.

In the last budget the government proposed to establish a new employment insurance commission, which would be funded with some seed money and established to follow certain rules to make sure there is balance. That balance obviously depends on some circumstances.

I wonder if the member has taken into account the rules established for this proposed commission, which I understand will not start until 2012, and whether he has done any estimates as to what he or his party believe will be the actual cost of implementation. The government has indicated it will be some \$4.5 billion. I wonder if the member has an idea of how much these provisions would cost if implemented.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his excellent question.

Take for example the 360 hour threshold. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, Mr. Kevin Page, estimated the cost of that measure, if implemented, at \$1.148 billion, which is well below the \$4 billion suggested by the Conservatives.

Another cost, and the highest, would be associated with raising the benefit rate from 55% to 60%, as forecasted when the Liberal Party was in government and, later, under the Conservatives. This benefit rate increase from 55% to 60% would apply across the board. This cost, which is the highest, is \$1.2 billion.

Is there money for that? When the cutbacks started, the premium rate was \$2.20. Today, it is \$1.76 per \$100 of insurable earnings. Yet, surpluses continue to be accumulated. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives have pursued a conservative policy, maintaining premiums to a minimum, thereby limiting benefits.

[English]

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, throughout the summer I came across a lot of people who said they were in a desperate situation. They have been laid off. Some of them have worked for many years in a job, they are in their fifties and they cannot find another job.

On top of that, they have to use up all their severance pay before they can get employment insurance. As the House knows, the New Democrats have said that should not be the case and that they should be able to get employment insurance immediately. I know the Bloc supported this. Unfortunately, many Liberal members did not.

In the case of extending employment insurance five to twenty weeks, I know the private member's bill supports that. Is that an area that the Bloc understands must happen? It is an area that many unemployed people desperately want, because they do not want to go on welfare and become destitute.

*Private Members' Business*

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Mr. Speaker, the member raised an important issue and, in doing so, she is showing that, by making access to the EI fund difficult for those who are insured, the government is putting the burden back onto the provinces. These are individuals who have been paying premiums, whether they are regular employees or, as the hon. member said, people over 55 who lost their jobs and are unable to find another job because of their age or other adjustment factors.

Note that we agree to some extent with the measures in place with respect to retraining people to enable them to find a different job. Where we have a problem, and the two main federal parties will not listen to reason, is regarding those over 55 who cannot find another job. That is truly dramatic for them. They have nothing and are often forced to live off their savings or even to sell their homes to get money to live on.

• (1130)

[English]

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back in the House after spending the summer seeing our economic action plan create jobs.

With respect to this bill, to put it quite simply, and with deference to my colleague, the bill is not sound policy. It is therefore unsupportable. It proposes a significant number of changes to the EI system, a veritable laundry list of the oppositions' demands with respect to the system.

Among many other changes, this bill proposes a flat 360-hour national entrance requirement, and a permanent flat 360-hour requirement at that. Not only would this bill be unaffordable and irresponsible now and in the short term, but it would also be increasingly unaffordable, irresponsible and economically damaging over the long term.

As this proposal is a big ticket item in this bill, I would like to take time to discuss it in some detail. I know my colleague from Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre noted the substantive cost to it. My learned colleague started in the low billions and then added to that list.

This bill would permanently reduce the EI entrance requirements to only 360 hours of work for regular benefits. Let us be perfectly clear about what this means. Three hundred and sixty hours is 45 days of work, just nine weeks. In reality this is a proposal for a two-month work year supported by the Liberal opposition, specifically the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. This program's history shows us that the 360-hour idea is nothing more than a return to the failed Liberal policies of the 1970s.

On August 1, in *The Canadian Press*, referring to this time and these negative Liberal policy effects, University of Ottawa economist David Gray said, "What happened in '71 to my mind was a policy catastrophe". To repeat it today, he said, "would just be catastrophic for the Canadian economy".

Shortening the qualification period for EI would be tantamount to encouraging a higher turnover of workers. The result of that kind of

misguided policy could be a permanent rise in the unemployment rate.

Others agree, and I will quote the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's July 23 press release. It said:

moving to a national standard of 360 or 420 hours of work as the basis for qualifying for EI would have substantial adverse impact on Canada's labour market—it would discourage work, increase structural unemployment, exacerbate skills and labour shortages, and stifle productivity.

All those are not acceptable. Simply put, they are ill-advised. Those are the not the sorts of policy outcomes the House should be pursuing.

Allow me to quote a few others. On August 1, the president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that the flat 360-hour proposal was "just ludicrous". It really sums it up.

On June 3, in the *National Post*, Jack Mintz, now the Palmer Chair in Public Policy at the University of Calgary, said that the flat 360-hour proposal is "[one] of the worst ideas...getting serious attention". He said that, "shortening drastically the qualification period [for EI] would encourage greater turnover of workers, result in a permanent rise in the unemployment rate and impose a high economic cost". It becomes quite clear what sorts of problems this 360-hour proposal carries with it.

The Department of Human Resources and Skills Development calculated the cost of this sort of proposal, and to put it mildly, it is costly. A 360-hour national entrance requirement including new entrants and re-entrants to the workforce, which this bill would do, and including the costs incurred by making the 360-hour standard permanent, which this bill would do, and including the related behavioural or dynamic effects of this permanent change, brings the cost of this policy alone to \$4 billion. My learned colleague speaks in billions of dollars as well.

In addition to that, we would have to provide for the costs of all other changes proposed in this bill. This could be in the tens or hundreds of millions of dollars. This would not be responsible at this time.

Where do these many billions of dollars come from? They come from Canadian workers and employers; eventually that is where they come from. But the immediate effect would be to further increase the federal deficit. I think it should be clear to everyone that this 360-hour, two-month work year proposal is a very costly and irresponsible policy.

• (1135)

The proposals put forward in the bill would truly hurt our ultimate goal of encouraging and supporting unemployed Canadians in their efforts to get back to work. The two-month work year proposal is unacceptable as policy and unacceptable to hard-working Canadians. It is a policy change this government will not be pursuing.

*Private Members' Business*

I know the opposition has been talking about access to EI. I would like to point out that EI access is high among those persons for whom the program is designed. According to Statistics Canada's 2008 employment insurance coverage survey, 82% of the unemployed who have paid into the program and have either lost their jobs or quit with just cause were eligible to receive benefits. In fact, fewer than 10% of those who have paid the premiums and then lost their jobs lack the required number of hours to qualify.

These high rates of access are due in large part to the variable entrance requirement. As of September 2009, 38 of the 58 EI regions have seen their entrance requirements decrease and their benefit durations increase. That is the way it was intended to work. During this same period, more than 82% of Canadian workers gained access to EI.

Right now, the duration of EI benefits is something very much worth addressing. Bill C-308 does propose a change of duration. It proposes to make permanent the temporary five extra weeks of EI benefits this government introduced as part of Canada's economic action plan. Our government implemented this measure because we recognize that during these challenging economic times people need more time to find employment. We also temporarily increased the maximum duration of benefits available from 45 to 50 weeks. As of August 30, close to 289,000 Canadians had already received additional benefits and both of these measures will be in place for new claimants until September 2010.

While our government firmly believes that these measures are providing immediate support to workers and their families right now, we anticipate that these measures will no longer be needed a year from now when they are scheduled to lapse. Making these additional weeks of benefits permanent, as this bill proposes, may hinder economic recovery by contributing to disincentives to work and labour shortages when the economy rebounds. We do not think this policy proposal is a responsible measure to take.

Of significance, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development has announced that she will be introducing more measures shortly to ensure that Canadians, who have paid into the EI system for years, are provided the help they need while they search for employment. This will be an important step for Canadian workers who have worked hard, paid their taxes their whole lives, and have found themselves in an economic hardship that they did not create.

Our government has already made a number of improvements to the EI program to support unemployed Canadians to help them get back into the workforce. We are providing five extra weeks of benefits. We made the EI application processes easier, faster and better for businesses and workers. We have increased opportunities for unemployed Canadians to upgrade their skills and get back to work. We are assisting businesses and their workers experiencing temporary slowdowns through improved and more accessible work sharing agreements. More than 160,000 Canadians are benefiting from work sharing agreements that are in place with almost 5,800 employers across Canada.

We believe it is important to ensure Canada's workforce is in a position to get good jobs and bounce back from the recession. Career transition assistance is a new initiative that will help an estimated

40,000 long-term workers, who need additional support for retraining, to find a new job. Through this initiative, we have extended the duration of EI regular income benefits for eligible workers, who choose to participate in long-term training, for up to two years. We are providing Canadians easier access and training that is tailored to the needs of workers in our country's different regions.

Our government is focused on what matters to Canadians: finding solutions to help long-term workers who have worked hard and paid into the system for years but are having trouble finding employment through no fault of their own; extending benefits to self-employed Canadians; and getting Canadians back to work through historic investments in infrastructure and skills training. The temporary measures under Canada's economic action plan are well suited to respond to the economic situation.

Our plan provides support to unemployed Canadians over the short-term. It is designated to meet the needs of the current economy and to help Canadians get the skills they need for the jobs of the future.

• (1140)

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, here we are back in Parliament in the fall, again speaking about employment insurance. It is almost as if we never left.

Much has happened over the summer but little has changed. We still have a Conservative government that puts politics before people, that does not see EI as the fundamental and critical part of our social infrastructure that is so necessary at a time of difficulty, but rather a government that sees EI as a political tool, a blunt instrument to divide Canadians, to divide Parliament, as part of a strategic ploy hatched to distribute false and misleading information to Canadians.

This is a government that uses false statistics and never allows facts or truth to get in the way of its goal to divide this country. These are the traits, indeed, this is the character of the government. Employment insurance is but one example.

Today we look at the work of my colleague, the distinguished member for Chambly—Borduas in Bill C-308, who today introduced his bill in this Parliament and is worthy of consideration. One of the most important things in his bill is the issue of a 360-hour national standard for eligibility. This is something that has had a lot of attention, not just from members of the House but from people across the country.

Let me just give a couple of quotes from people who might be recognized across Canada.

*Private Members' Business*

B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell said in August, “What we’re really saying is Canadian workers, whether they live in the Maritimes, the West or North or Ontario, we should treat them the same way”.

Brad Wall, Premier of Saskatchewan, said “Instead of 50-plus different treatments for the number of qualifying hours, we need to dramatically reduce that”.

Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach said, “An unemployed family, whether they live in Nova Scotia, Quebec or Alberta, are equally unemployed”.

The TD Bank, in July, said, “The truth of the matter is that during an economic downturn, it is no easier to find a job in a region with lower prevailing unemployment than in one with a higher unemployment rate”.

Pierre Fortin, economics professor, said of the Leader of the Opposition that his proposal of 360 hours was not a problem. It was just and it was fair.

The Star Phoenix in Saskatoon said, “Clearly, EI services should be equally applied across the country. Isn't that what being a nation is all about”?

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, who my colleague, the parliamentary secretary referred to, said:

A measure to improve the equity of the EI system that would be consistent with longer-term smart policy aimed at improving labour mobility and flexibility would be to immediately and permanently make the duration of, and access to, benefits equal—

How about this one: “An unemployed worker is an unemployed worker and deserves to be treated the same, regardless of region of residence. We will urge the immediate elimination of discriminatory EI elements such as regional entrance requirements”. This was said in the Reform Party of Canada platform statement authored by the now Prime Minister of this country. Let me repeat the last bit, “We will urge the immediate elimination of discriminatory EI elements such as regional entrance requirements”.

Here we are. We resume Parliament more or less where we left it off in June. As the session ended last spring, we all remember that we were on the verge of an election. It was averted when our leader and the Prime Minister agreed to a joint committee that would spend the summer looking at improvements to EI, specifically two things: regional fairness, which was our issue, and the Prime Minister added the issue of the self-employed. That was the proposal from the Conservatives, part of which they had promised in the last election but had not acted upon.

We had these meetings. I was there along with my colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Kevin Chan from our leader's office, and three members of the opposition. The meetings were difficult but I do not suppose that this particularly relevant. People do not care how we spend our summer time.

The bottom line is that the Conservative members of this committee stalled, delayed and brought nothing to the table, absolutely nothing serious. I do not believe this was unintentional. The Conservative members broke confidential protocols. It had been decided that there would be certain protocols about confidentiality.

At almost every turn the Conservative members prevented departmental officials from giving information that we had all agreed to, including the Conservative members. That is unbelievable.

The Conservative members leaked a document that they themselves indicated should not be leaked. I am looking at it. It says “Employment insurance working group—not for distribution”. The members brought that to a meeting. The only problem was, it was already given to the media. Why would the Conservative members do that?

Mr. Speaker, I can see you are shocked. The Conservative members did it because there was false and misleading information in that document. They increased the cost of the Liberal proposal for regional fairness by over 400%, not a little bit.

● (1145)

I took the decision to ask the Parliamentary Budget Officer, an independent officer of this House, to review the government numbers. We now know the result of that.

The PBO, appointed by the government, came back and said, yes, the government inflated the cost and, in fact, indicated that the actual cost of our 360-hour temporary proposal was slightly under the cost proposed by the Liberals.

This is some of what the Parliamentary Budget Officer said in his report:

The government's total cost estimate overstates the cost of the proposed 360-hour national standard. The Parliamentary Budget Officer believes that the government's dynamic cost estimate is flawed. More important, the PBO also believes that only the static costs should be considered in costing the proposal, given the structure of the program and that the proposed change to the EI system is in effect for one year only. This is the independent officer of this House and this is what he came back with.

The response from the government was that it did not change anything. The government first ignored it, then continued to mislead and still used, as recently as Friday, the \$4 billion, even though everybody knows that it was discredited.

That is how the summer went.

I was asked many times by people across the country, including people in my own caucus and in my riding, “Why do you keep going to these meetings? You know that the Conservatives are not serious. They have not presented anything. Why would you keep going back?” We went to every scheduled meeting, to try to find a consensus.

Canadians have more important things on their minds than to follow what is happening with an employment insurance working group. However, to the extent that they paid attention, who could blame them for saying that that was just an extension of a dysfunctional Parliament? Who could blame them for saying, “You have just dragged question period throughout the summer. You guys can't get along in the House of Commons and you can't get along in the summer”? Who could blame them for saying, “He said this and she said that; you're all equally to blame”?



*Private Members' Business*

We tried to make it work. We went to those committees to try to make those committees work. Yes, we had an opening position, supported by many people across this country: economists, labour leaders, anti-poverty groups, even business people, and premiers of provinces who have many representatives on the other side of this House. We had that position, we presented it, and we all agreed that we would go away and get that costed. When the number came back, it was distorted.

However, beyond that, we also asked other questions. These are the questions we tabled to the group on July 23.

What is the current deficit in this year's EI account?

What are the components of that deficit? There was no answer.

How many Canadians have seen increased access to EI by region?

What would be the incremental cost of having a 360-hour national standard for eligibility?

We also asked, at that same meeting in July, what would be the cost of a 395-hour standard and a 420-hour standard?

We asked, how many Canadians draw benefits for the maximum duration?

What percentage of claimants are expected to draw the maximum weeks? Perhaps extending benefits further is a very sensible thing.

We did not get answers to all of those questions.

We also asked, in areas where the unemployment changes the eligibility criteria, how does the time lag between job loss of people becoming eligible for benefits go into the issue of a three-month average versus a one-month average to determine eligibility?

We asked all those questions.

We followed the protocols of the working group. We established the working group, we established protocols, we followed those protocols, and we expected answers. We were told we would get answers.

At the last meeting of the group, the minister told us that he told the department not to even bother with that, not to even bother with the stuff that we all agreed with.

Many of us in this House come from backgrounds in business or labour organizations or other non-for-profit organizations. We do negotiations as a way of doing business to make perfect not be the enemy of better. However, we all know, whether we are in labour or management or any other organization, it takes two to make something happen.

Employment insurance to the government is a ploy. It is part of the game of politics.

Here today, as Parliament resumes in the fall, we are where we left off in the spring, and for the government the games continue.

● (1150)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-308 introduced by the member for Chambly—Borduas.

It is common knowledge that this bill is very important to me, just as it is to a great many workers throughout the country. This is a bill that the NDP has proposed quite a few times in the House of Commons.

Some people may not know or may have forgotten that in 1997, when I was elected, the same changes were being studied. Cuts to employment insurance were initiated by Brian Mulroney and continued through Jean Chrétien's tenure. In 1996, employment insurance cuts were disastrous for the country and for the workers.

I feel obliged to start off with a few comments. The member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour is trying to tell us that the Liberal Party—I do not know if the members have seen the light at the end of the tunnel—wants to be the saviour of employment insurance.

At the same time, the Liberal Party is saying that this is temporary. That worries me. What does “temporary” mean? I heard the leader of the official opposition, the Liberal leader, say that temporary means “as long as there is an economic crisis”. As soon as the economic crisis is over, this temporary measure will be terminated. We are already hearing on the news that the crisis may soon be over. But we do not really know how long it will last.

The bill will set 360 hours as the number of hours required to qualify. I have a problem with the Conservatives' position on 360 hours. It is as though they have always said that it would cost \$4 billion and that too many people would receive employment insurance. To hear them talk, only 15% of workers are not eligible for employment insurance. According to their data, 85% of workers pay premiums and are eligible for unemployment benefits and only 15% are not. It is as though all of Canada were applying for benefits. Come on. There are 33 million workers in Canada.

[*English*]

What an insult to the workers when we say to them that if we bring it down to 360 hours, they will all get on EI and they will be on EI instead of working. What an insult to working Canadian men and women and the people of Quebec. What an insult.

I was in France not too long ago, and I asked how much people were getting paid for employment insurance. It was 80% of their wages. I used the Conservative argument and asked whether they thought that at 80% of their wages, people would want to be on EI instead of working. The representative of the government said that their people love to work, that they want to go to work, but that in the meantime, they do not want to punish the family of the person who has lost his or her job, and that they invest the money in the community. That is good for the economic crisis.

*Private Members' Business*

[*Translation*]

When I went to France, I asked the question. People can check if they want. In France, employment insurance recipients receive 80% of their wages. I asked a question that could very well have been asked by the Conservatives or the Liberals: do you not think that people who get 80% of their wages in EI benefits would want to be on EI instead of working? The government representative said no, that people want to work and are eager to work. It is their own employment insurance system, paid for by employers and employees. He said that they are proud of the fact that they have a good income because they can spend that money within the community, which is good in tough economic times.

The government and the Liberals are saying that people are lazy, that they do not want to work. About the 360 hours, where is the government taking its figures when it says that it will cost \$4 billion and that nearly everybody can get EI benefits already? This obviously makes no sense whatsoever.

I listened to what the government representative was saying earlier. The parliamentary secretary was saying that all the changes proposed by the Bloc Québécois would cost more than \$4 billion. There are several changes: 360 hours; increasing the benefit period; increasing the rate of weekly benefits to 60%; eliminating the distinctions between a new entrant and a re-entrant to the labour force; eliminating the presumption that persons related to each other do not deal with each other at arm's length; increasing the maximum yearly insurable earnings to \$42,500 and introducing an indexing formula; and adding a new part VIII.01 to the act relating to self-employed persons.

Now they are changing their tune and saying that it will cost \$4.1 or \$4.2 billion. And they are also saying at the same time that reducing the number of hours to 360 will cost \$4 billion. Which figure is the right one?

• (1155)

[*English*]

What is the right number? The 360 hours are supposed to cost some \$4 million, and the parliamentary secretary of the Conservative government said that all the changes of the Bloc would cost \$4 million. I would like to hear the right number.

[*Translation*]

The real figures indicate that it would cost \$1.4 billion. That money belongs to workers in case they lose their jobs.

I heard the Liberals say that it was terrible. I read in BC newspapers that people in that province should be treated the same way as those in Atlantic Canada, in Regina and across Canada. The 360-hour rule should apply to everyone. It was the Liberals, supported by the Conservatives, who established the varying threshold, increasing the number of hours from 420 to 700 and then to 910. That is why we are saying that there is not much difference between the Grits and the Tories. They all take their orders from Bay Street. That is where the decisions are made.

However, for those workers who lose their jobs, the decision is made on Monday morning when they no longer have a job to go to and wonder how they will support their family. They wonder

whether they should get EI benefits or welfare benefits. That is where it hurts.

When people say that the country will go into debt if changes are made to employment insurance, which debt are they talking about? The former Liberal government and the current Conservative government stole \$47 billion from the EI fund that belonged to workers. So we should be able to say that there is a fund with surpluses and to use that money.

We must study the possibility of making changes to EI. It is a serious issue. We must ask ourselves what we can do to help workers. People must stop telling tales and giving false figures.

It has always been said—and experts said it—that only 38% or 42% of people who contribute to EI are eligible for benefits.

Therefore, since the Conservatives keep telling us that this is false and that 85% are eligible, why are they so afraid of the 360-hour rule and why do they think that the whole country will receive EI benefits? Why are the Conservatives so worried? A mere 15% is not that much, if I am to accept the government's arguments.

It is the same thing with the workers referred to in the bill put forward by the Bloc member, those who are related to the owner of the business. We want to have small and medium sized businesses and promote them. That is the right thing to do. To build a business, one starts by hiring family members, and then, as the business grows, they start hiring outside the family. It is discriminatory to deny benefits to contributing employees when they are laid off because they are related to the owner of a business who pays his or her taxes. It is discriminatory because the decision is simply based on the fact that a family relationship exists. They have to be treated like any other employee. If they did their job, worked the hours, paid their premiums and lost their job, that is what matters. The current approach is totally discriminatory. And there are such cases.

I am thinking of the Liberals, the so-called saviours of EI. I am sorry, but that makes me laugh. They are the ones who, in 2005, voted down a motion I had put before the House of Commons, asking that the 12 best weeks be used in calculating benefits in order to help the workers. The Liberals did that. They also increased to 700 the number of hours of work required to qualify and established requirements that vary across the country. To listen to some people, 360 hours is the end of the world. One should remember that all that was required previously was 150 hours.

The myth about these 360 hours allowing individuals to receive benefits for one year is fallacious, because people are entitled to benefits for a given number of weeks.

Let me conclude by saying that we will certainly support the bill from the Bloc Québécois.

*Private Members' Business*

●(1200)

**Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am especially happy, for at least two reasons, to have an opportunity today to rise on Bill C-308, introduced by my colleague from Chambly—Borduas. The first, of course, is that I am deeply concerned about the flaws in the current employment insurance system and the proposals for remedying them. The second is that the Conservatives and Liberals set up a phoney committee to discuss these issues behind closed doors and it is wonderful to finally have a chance to hear the positions of all the parties in the House.

There are many problems with the current system, but we are very familiar with them all because they have been pointed out repeatedly by the various stakeholders. As early as February 2005, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities produced an exhaustive report with no fewer than 28 recommendations to reform employment insurance from top to bottom.

But it remained largely a dead letter. Both the Liberals and Conservatives ignored its conclusions, even though they were very reasonable and appropriate. No one should be surprised, therefore, that we in the Bloc Québécois took a rather jaundiced view of the announcement that a secret committee on employment insurance would be quickly and quietly convened to save face in view of the thousands of unemployed people who would have been able to take immediate advantage of the measures in Bill C-308.

This bill does not reinvent the wheel. All it does is pull together the best proposals for finally improving the accessibility of an employment insurance system that has been strait-jacketed for far too long by the restrictive changes introduced by the same Liberals who say now in public that they are outraged but then vote in favour of a budget that does nothing.

The most shocking thing about this refusal to finally re-open the eligibility requirements is the ideologically driven insistence on seeing all unemployed people as potential cheats. The government's way of thinking was on display as recently as last Friday in the report from the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer when it estimated the cost of a standard eligibility requirement of 360 hours.

The government assumes in its calculations that, in addition to the 166,000 existing unemployed, more than 180,000 people would qualify under the new standard and would try to take advantage of it by voluntarily quitting their jobs, with the connivance of their employers, after accumulating enough hours to qualify. As we know, voluntary departures have not been covered for a long time by the current system.

It is only in this way that the government is able to conclude that changing the minimum requirements would cost about \$2.5 billion, or more than twice the estimate of the parliamentary budget officer. It is hard to imagine a government with more contempt for its own citizens. It is especially sad to think that this contempt and these suspicions are penalizing people who have had the misfortune of losing their jobs. The government is basically treating 180,000 Canadians, and therefore more than 40,000 Quebeckers, as potential liars and scam artists.

I have a question now for the government. If the intent to commit a crime is just as punishable as the crime itself—as it is in the Canadian Criminal code—perhaps the government thinks that it should rush out and arrest these people who might commit fraud? Let us make no mistake. This is the exact same logic behind the government's imposition of a two week waiting period. The same logic applies to people who do not deal at arm's length with the employer. It is up to them to prove beyond a doubt that they have no intention of defrauding the plan. This does not take into account the fact that the procedure can take a number of months, even a year, before the applicant is deemed to be acting in good faith. All this cynicism is extremely discouraging.

Perhaps we should remind the government of the principle underlying the seven measures proposed in Bill C-308—attempting to help the unemployed by increasing benefits and eligibility does not amount to promoting unemployment. On the contrary, these measures have a single aim—to enable the unemployed to retain some dignity despite the difficult times they face.

Let us review these measures here, one by one. The first, and perhaps one of the most important, is to introduce a standard qualifying period of 360 hours across the board. Despite the claims of the Conservatives, who clearly have not taken the trouble to study our proposal seriously, there is absolutely no question of granting the maximum number of weeks of benefits to anyone who has worked 360 hours. This is misinformation, as my colleague has just said.

One need only consult schedule I of the bill. An individual who has worked 360 hours would be entitled to between 14 and 36 weeks of benefits. Entitlement to 50 weeks, the maximum under this bill, would require over 1,115 hours of work and residence in a region with a level of unemployment over 16%.

●(1205)

If this measure were passed, it would substantially reduce the phenomenon known as the spring gap, the period in which many seasonal workers receive neither income nor benefits.

The second measure in Bill C-308 concerns the weekly benefit rate. At the moment, as everyone knows, the rate is set at 55% of insurable earnings, to a maximum of \$41,300 a year. This bill proposes to increase it by 5% to set it at 60%.

Over 166,000 Quebeckers—nearly two thirds of whom are women—earn minimum wage, which is currently \$9 an hour. This means that these workers can earn a maximum of \$173.25 a week or \$9,000 a year. Clearly that is far too little to live on decently.

*Government Orders*

The third measure in this bill, which perfectly complements the previous one, is to increase the maximum insurable earnings to \$41,500 and introduce a guaranteed annual indexing formula. This increase would generate additional revenues and thus fund some of the improvements proposed by this bill. According to the figures of the human resources department, this increase would lead to additional revenues of \$420 million and spending of \$245 million resulting in a credit balance of \$175 million.

Fourth, the bill also proposes finally eliminating the discrimination facing people who are entering or re-entering the workforce—the Liberals put forward that distinction in 1996. Those individuals are unfairly penalized, especially women who often leave the workforce to care for their children. That is why, according to a study by the Fédération des travailleurs du Québec, only 16% of young unemployed workers under 25 years old are receiving EI benefits, while in the early 1990s, that proportion was 52%.

The fifth measure aims to correct the problem I mentioned earlier, namely, the presumption that workers who do not have an arm's length relationship with their employers are basically guilty until proven innocent. Of course, this goes against the presumption of innocence that is pivotal in all modern judicial systems, and enshrined in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and its Canadian equivalent.

Sixth, Bill C-308 amends the formula used to calculate insurable earnings; the calculation would be based on the 12 best weeks in the 52-week qualifying period.

Lastly, this bill opens the door to the possibility of self-employed workers taking part in the EI system on a voluntary basis. According to the most recent numbers, over 16% of Canadian workers are self-employed at this time, and that number has risen recently particularly because of the recession. It is high time we offered them the opportunity to enjoy some sort of income security.

These seven measures would undoubtedly correct many major deficiencies that exist in the current employment insurance system—first, by improving it, but also by removing certain provisions originally put in place to address the terrible suspicions that successive Liberal and Conservative governments have seemed to harbour against unemployed workers.

In closing, losing one's job is rarely a joyous occasion. Having to prove to the government that one is not trying to cheat the system is even more humiliating. Workers who find themselves in that situation are reduced to begging the government for assistance that they rightly deserve, assistance that they themselves have paid for, day after day, week after week.

That is why I invite all parliamentarians to look at this bill not simply as a way to improve the system, but as a way to correct certain glaring injustices.

• (1210)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and this item is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

The House resumed from May 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Colombia and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, be read the second time and referred to a committee, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Windsor West had five minutes remaining in his speech the last time the bill was before the House so he can pick up right where he left off and finish his allocated time.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, from the very moment the House resumed, the Conservatives began heckling, so some things do not change. Unfortunately, Bill C-23 has re-emerged as well, which is of concern. The bill would bring in a trade agreement between Canada and Colombia.

The bill is about providing a privileged trade agreement to Colombia. It is not about the issue of fear of trade in general and free trade. It is about providing privileged access to the Canadian markets as well as Canada entering into another deeper relationship with Colombia. On the surface, there is no doubt that we should pursue trade agreements. However, what is disturbing about the bill is we are doing so with a country that has had significant problems such as murder and crime. As well, a series of problems related to civil society and the economics of its nation have not yet been addressed. Sadly, since the last time I spoke, approximately 27 more trade unionists have been killed in Colombia.

I had an opportunity to discuss this at committee. I questioned the Colombian representatives about the number of leaders who had been assassinated in their state. We were not talking about union activists from forestry or mining. We were talking about people who were part of their civil society, leaders of their nursing, teachers and university associations. I asked about specific cases. Interestingly enough everything was a crime of passion, assassinations of people who were fighting for basic human and worker rights. A continuation of the explanation was that these were personal problems, people being assassinated in their homes, in the streets, at work or somewhere else. That is unacceptable.

That is why I am surprised we have come back to this bill at this point. I know the Liberals vacillated on this issue. At first they were very supportive of the bill, supporting the government in moving it forward. Then at the same time there was a big push back. Thousands of Canadians have petitioned against this deal, saying that we need to have some further resolve of the Colombian government's protection of its citizens before we even entertain this type of deeper relationship. Once again, it is a privileged relationship and would be different than we do for most nations.

*Government Orders*

Interestingly then the Liberals apparently changed their position because it was supposed to be a confidence matter. I guess they are showing more confidence in the government again. I do not understand how this place works any more. It seems every day there is a different story.

It appears the Liberals are going to support this measure and that is disturbing. We would rather see a resolution of some of these problems so the trade organizations, civil society members and the Colombian people can be supported. Then the government can be rewarded by a trade agreement, but not before it resolves these very serious issues.

Some of the names may not mean much to some people, but Tique Adolfo was murdered recently. Arango Alberto, Pinto Alexander, Careno Armando, Franco Franco Victor and Rodriguez Pablo were murdered as well. It is interesting to note that Rodriguez Pablo was a teacher.

This is what really disturbs me about the way we are approaching this. I am glad I had a chance to read some of the names into the record because at least they will be remembered in that way and in the that context. It disturbs me that my country would enter a privileged trading relationship with a government that continues to allow people in its civil society, including teachers, to be murdered because of the beliefs and values for which they stand.

If we want to have an open and free democratic society and we want to have a fair trade agreement with Columbia, it is time to say no to its government until it clean up its house, get things in order, ensures that people in its civil society and working class can do the necessary work to advance the country. Let us not reward Colombia first. We need to stand strong right now.

● (1215)

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, why does the NDP continue to use very misleading language when it addressed the crime problem in Colombia? In a very inflammatory way, the member said that the Colombia government allowed murder. Would he be willing to retract that statement? It is a very serious statement to say that a government is allowing murder when the record is very clear that it is being very aggressive on prosecutions, following up, arrests and successful convictions.

Will he apologize and change his language? He has made a very serious statement about another government. He has said that a government is allowing and permitting murder. Would he clarify that and perhaps apologize?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, I have nothing to apologize for or clarify. The nation has been too well versed in history in understanding the seriousness of the nature of the problems there. There has been a continuation of public policy that has not protected people who stand for ordinary citizens.

I am ashamed that Canada would defend that type of approach. It is extremely important for our country to stand strong. We are not just talking about mining and different types of industries that have had historical conflict. We are talking about people who are teachers and who organize society. The government is supposed to support them, yet they continue to have problems. I simply cannot stand by,

witness that and pretend, by a distance, that it is not something serious. It needs to be addressed.

We should send a much stronger language back to Colombia to show that if it is to have a privileged trade agreement with Canada, it will come with conditions. We have trade agreements with them, but this is a privileged trade agreement that comes with conditions, which is the people in its society are to be protected.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade obviously has not looked at the facts coming out from human rights organizations in Colombia.

A report was issued by the Defense Intelligence Agency, which named President Uribe, more than a decade ago, as 82nd on the list of the top 100 Colombian narco-traffickers. The Defense Intelligence Agency said that now-President Uribe was “a Colombian politician... dedicated to collaboration with the Medellín cartel at high government levels” and that he was a close personal friend of Pablo Escobar, the notorious drug lord.

The Defense Intelligence Agency is tying them in with narco-traffickers. Given that human rights organizations have already shown direct links between the Uribe administration and murderous parliamentary thugs, how can the Conservatives say, with any credibility, that they are opposed to drug trafficking and crimes when they want to give a privileged trading relationship to that regime?

● (1220)

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, it is shocking. We have obvious evidence of drug cartels tied with those who are part of the governing body. It is something that needs further examination.

It should not be one from which the minister distances himself. He should be further delving into that relationship and doing the work necessary to ensure that things are going to be approached in a very professional and appropriate manner. However, what we have is an ideological drive by the Conservatives to bring in a trade agreement with Colombia.

Once again, this is a privileged trade agreement. Nothing right now would affect the trade agreements that we have and the trade that is happening between our two countries. This is a privileged trade agreement. Why would we not be working with other nations and have them progressing on human rights and moving forward in ways that are open for democracy versus rewarding a country and then hoping later on that it is going to do something?

In this privileged trade agreement, we have sidebar issues for the environment, multinationals and trade unionism. That clouds the issue and provides a greater cover for those who do not want to follow the rules to break them and not have consequences. It is beyond me why we would want to structure our agreement to a regime of that nature and has those connections. It just shows how weak the Conservatives truly are on the drug issue.

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I noted the comment made by the hon. member referencing the sidebar agreement. One of the regrettable aspects to NAFTA was that environment and labour rights were sidebarred. Since then, there has been a lot of discussion that we should go further and we should strengthen that.

We heard a lot of worries during the American election that they might get serious about opening up NAFTA, not necessarily for protectionism but to make sure that the environmental and labour provisions were actually included in any future trade agreements, potentially opening up the one that we have with the United States and Mexico.

The hon. member mentioned these sidebar agreements. Does he think we have actually progressed in Canada by still sidebarring and not making binding on the parties matters related to workers' rights and protection of the environment of their communities?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, one of the interesting things about the NAFTA agreement and our trade agreement with the United States is that we have actually seen on their side of the border a progression to understanding that, for us to compete in a global economy, often the environment, as well as labour and other types of issues, are used against us. They are used against us because other countries are able to exploit the environment, exploit workers, exploit women and children. We have seen a progression in the United States to identify that, if we are to compete in the world market, other countries have to raise their levels. To be able to ship into and dump into our markets when they are exploiting children or exploiting labour, whether it be women, the activists or the environment, is something we should contest. There should be a voice raised against this, because we are not doing ourselves or those countries any good by allowing those conditions.

That is important, because our country still seems stuck in a rut that, if we deregulate everything and have no standards, we will actually do better. The reality is that deregulation is allowed, not just in terms of the poisoning of our food, but we have lost companies because of that. They have gone to other districts where there is fair competition, as opposed to those companies that want to use the environment or labour practices as a subsidy, and they do well. Other companies have moved away from that.

It is really important that there be an understanding that the North American market has to shift. Once again, there needs to be more scrutiny on those products and services that not only come from here, but also those that are shipped and dumped into our markets, such that they will have standards to them. If we do not do that, we are not even helping the people from those countries. All we are doing is allowing the continuation of abuse and a pattern of behaviour that will not sustain this planet and will not sustain the workers and keep many people out of poverty.

So I say to the Canadian government, let us use this as an example to Colombia. The carrot-and-stick approach is one thing we can do. If they raise their standards, if they solve these issues, if they work on them and we monitor them and put them on an approach that will take these concerns away, then we can move into a privileged trade agreement. Why give them a privileged trade agreement right now when we know the abuses are still there? They are historic enough in

this century and are significant beyond even just Canada; they are international. Why would we do that? Why would we send the message to the rest of the world that we are willing to do business under the terms and conditions of these regimes versus what we should be doing? Canada is doing the exact opposite.

● (1225)

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question for the hon. member is, with Colombia having been torn apart by civil war over the last 40 years, with much of that warfare being fueled by the narco-economy, recognizing the fact that Canada already has a commercial relationship with Colombia without a rules-based structure around it, how can providing legitimate economic opportunity to the people of Colombia with a rules-based structure with the most robust labour and environmental standards of any trade agreement Canada has ever signed and providing legitimate economic opportunity to wean them away from the narco-economy make the situation worse?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** It speaks for itself, Mr. Speaker, in a sense. We are entering into an agreement with a narco-economy. That is it. That is what we are asking our country to do right now. I oppose that. I think other provisions are needed. There has been some work done to help Colombia progress to a better position, but it has not yet worked.

So why would we enter into a trade agreement with a narco-economy? I ask the Liberal member, why would we want to engage in a narco-economy?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in a few moments I will get into the substance, thin as it is, of the questions from the member for Windsor West, but the record will clearly show that he did not answer my question, which asked him to clarify his statement where he says another government is allowing wholesale slaughter and murders. He did not address that.

He has responded to a question about a report from his colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster, who is always using the most horrifically misleading information related to this particular agreement. The report that was quoted in fact was denounced by the very people who commissioned it in the last decade, so not only is he totally out of date, he does not have the foggiest idea of the absolute unqualified nature of that support.

Canada is as prosperous as it is because we have always been a trading nation. We have realized since our very beginning that we can produce more than we can consume, so we trade with other nations. It is one of the reasons we are as prosperous as we are.

In any nation with whom we have entered a trading agreement, the results have been a corresponding increase in industry, jobs, GDP and trade back and forth between those two nations. I am not saying freedom of trade is the answer or the panacea to every single problem we face. It clearly is not, but in every case where a free trade agreement has been struck, the standard of living goes up, jobs increase, and trade increases in every situation.

*Government Orders*

We believe in the World Trade Organization, the WTO. We are a partner to that. There are over 150 countries in that particular organization. So as members can well imagine, completing a round of negotiations is difficult at the best of times, and the present Doha round is emblematic of that. We are committed, though, to seeing ongoing changes at the WTO. We think we can see those, and we are committed to that organization.

Meanwhile, because we realize that sometimes that organization can move slowly just because of its sheer size, we also engage in a positive way with other countries in bilateral agreements, sometimes multilateral within a particular region or an organization. So it is that we have been engaging with Colombia, as our record also shows.

I will be speaking tonight at a reception at the Peruvian embassy, where we will be celebrating the fact that we have completed a free trade agreement with Peru. We have one with Costa Rica. We can list quite a significant number of agreements.

I was in Jordan at the end of June and early July and signed a free trade agreement there. The Prime Minister signed off on the final negotiations on a free trade agreement with Panama. Of course, we have a free trade agreement as well with the United States and Mexico, and on and on it goes.

Therefore, following that pathway of prosperity, we continue to want to see a conclusion here in Parliament of the discussions and a ratification of the trade deal with Colombia.

It is important when we are looking at countries with whom we deal that we do not take a snapshot in time, one that is maybe 20 years old, which the NDP seems to dwell on with its old black-and-white Polaroids, drawing out relics from the past. We need to ask, in which direction is a government moving; in which direction is the country moving?

I would just reflect on some data. This is not our data. This is data that is internationally confirmed in terms of a number of indicators in Colombia that would speak to us about whether that country is seeing improvement or movement in the right direction at all.

Between 2002 and 2008, kidnappings decreased by 87%. Do they still happen? Yes, they do. They still happen in Canada, too.

Homicide rates have dropped by 44%. Are people still being murdered in that country? Yes, they are. They are still being murdered in Canada also, not at the same rate, thankfully, but the rates are dropping because of the vigorous pursuit and the prosecution of people involved in those murders.

The median poverty line has fallen from 55% to 45%. Colombia has attained coverage of 94% in basic education and 31% in higher education.

• (1230)

Right now, 90.4% of the population enjoys some form of health care. Is it as high a percentage as in Canada? No, but some form of health care is available to 90.4% of the population. The goal that Colombia seems about to reach is universal health coverage by 2010—and just to inform the NDP, which is still hopelessly trapped in its past rhetoric, the year is 2009.

More than 350,000 internally displaced persons have now received comprehensive protection and access to basic social services.

Training programs for more than 12,000 civil servants have taken place on the new Colombian law on children and adolescents.

There has been a reintegration of 80,000 children and adolescents into the community through education and community-based services. These 80,000 children are among those who were frightfully exposed to a country that was for too long devastated by the effects of the narcotics trade and severe revolutionary actions, some of the left-wing revolutionary movement, that devastated so much of that country. Many of these situations have been improved on, resulting in the reintegration, thankfully, of some 80,000 children. There is more to do, but Colombia is moving in the right direction.

More than 900 community justice officials have now been trained in terms of how to resolve conflicts at the local level. They have a record of some 45,000 of those conflicts having been resolved at the local community level.

Aid has supported environmentally sustainable agriculture products for more than 4,500 farmers, giving them alternatives to illicit crops. They were previously at the mercy of the narcotics dealers and revolutionary groups, and now they have alternatives. That has benefited more than 30,000 people.

Our own labour projects have provided technical assistance in Colombia, including \$400,000 for the modernization of labour administration and \$644,000 for the enforcement of labour rights.

Is it perfect in Colombia? No, but it is certainly moving in the right direction.

We have seen news releases as recently as today from labour organizations in Canada that say we are moving precipitously. They say we are rushing into this particular agreement and ask why we are doing that. I would like to quote some timelines that are important.

It was over seven years ago that the former federal Liberal government began to enter into informal discussions with the Andean community. Formal negotiations began June 7, 2007, with the government itself, in a formal way.

The Standing Committee on International Trade completed its study on the Canada-Colombia FTA in June 2008. That committee brought in many witnesses from all sides of the equation.

I have met with leaders of civil society groups in Colombia, including those who, at great risk to themselves, staged marches and protests in that country about the things that matter most to them. These people are very much concerned about the people they represent.

*Government Orders*

The FTA itself and the side agreements were signed on November 21, 2008. We are well into 2009 and approaching 2010. Since 2008, the full text has been available on the Internet and at the request of any individual. Yet, with all of this, the NDP and a few labour leaders are saying this is being rushed into.

We have taken a very prudent path in pursuing this particular agreement. It is something that is totally dismissed, time and again, by the NDP and certain others who are ideologically opposed. We should be clear about that. They are plainly and simply ideologically opposed to the notion of free and fair trade with other countries. They might make notions or motions in another direction, but I understand it is an ideological problem they have.

With the recent difficult times we are having with the United States on the buy-American provisions, what has been the NDP response? Those members want us to build walls around the country. They want us to build walls so that we just sell stuff to each other. That has been the NDP response, and historically, of course, that has proven to be devastating not just to economies but to workers.

So here we are with this free trade agreement that has been signed but quite rightly needs to be ratified.

• (1235)

I would ask that the NDP consider something here. I wonder why its members were mute, why they were silent while Colombia signed free trade agreements with European countries that do not even have the high-grade labour and environmental provisions that we have in our agreement. The NDP was silent on that. There was no opposition. Why are its members silent today when just last Friday the United States indicated that it is going to release the funding that goes before it moves toward ratification of a free trade agreement? The U.S. has been withholding certain funding based on its concerns about the situation in Colombia, has done a thorough review of that situation, has now attested also to the improvements it has seen, and has released important funding that it has been holding back until now. I wonder why the NDP did not comment on that.

It is very disturbing to me that the NDP has no problem at all with Canadian farmers, workers, producers now being at an economic disadvantage when it comes to dealing with Colombia because Colombia has signed deals with European countries. I say congratulations to them for that and well done to the countries that have signed agreements with them. However, in these cases, now Canadian producers, Canadian workers who want to sell their product into Colombia are at a serious disadvantage because the tariffs on those products, which our workers face, have been removed by European countries, and, I would dare say, at some point soon if we do not get moving on this, we will also be at a disadvantage with the United States. However, it does not seem to be of any concern to the NDP that our Canadian workers are at a disadvantage because of free trade deals Colombia has signed with European countries, which the NDP did not protest against at all, and here we are with a labour side accord and environmental accords which the European agreements with the Colombians do not even contain.

We are committed, and now, by signing, Colombia is committed, to the declarations of the International Labour Organization, declarations that cover everything from child labour laws to

occupational health and safety laws, and that have to do with minimum wage, the workday itself and hours of work. Colombia is committed to the same guidelines Canada faces in terms of environmental protection.

I would submit that this is the highest-grade free trade agreement between Colombia and any other country.

The NDP members continue to say they are embarrassed about Canada. We hear that at regular intervals and, frankly, it is disheartening to hear that, but they regularly say how embarrassed they are about Canada.

I am proud of this free trade agreement.

They will not be able to produce a higher-grade free trade agreement than the one we have with Colombia right now. However, they are content to see our workers lose jobs because our produce and our products and the innovation of our hard-working labourers here in Canada are at a distinct disadvantage. When we sign this, if we get this through, 84% of all the tariffs on agricultural goods, which our producers face right now, will be removed and it will open up more doors of opportunity for workers in Colombia.

Not every problem in Colombia has been settled. Nor has every social problem in Canada been settled. However, this agreement would hold not just the current government in Colombia but any future government to account with guidelines that are transparent, that are provable and that have sanctions, such as fines of up to \$15 million for violations of either the labour or environmental designations in this particular free trade agreement.

I ask the NDP members to address these questions directly, and I would ask them to stick to the facts.

• (1240)

We still have not had an apology from the member of Parliament for Burnaby—New Westminster who, on a number of occasions, has stood and said that the new trade agreement in Canada — and usually it is said that in debate it is folly even to repeat the ridiculous comments that are made which would be camouflaged as true debate by our opposition, but I have to expose the ludicrous nature and the panicked state into which the NDP has fallen. The member for Burnaby—New Westminster continues to say that someone who commits murder in Colombia is subject to a fine, and that is a result of the free trade agreement. My respect for him will increase marginally the day he apologizes for using utterly false information.



*Government Orders*

It would be far better for NDP members to stand and say they are ideologically opposed to this and most free trade agreements, and that they do not like it, and to maintain that position. I respect that, but then they should allow the vote to take place, because members have looked at this now for years. They have heard from their constituents. They have heard a variety of things. They have heard that some constituents are for it and some are against it. There probably are not too many more members whose minds will be changed on this, so I would ask members of the NDP to at least allow the democratic thing to happen now on something that has been discussed as far back as 2002, to allow the vote to come to the House of Commons. Do not hold back the working people in Colombia who want to see this move ahead. Do not hold back Canadian workers who have products and services to sell that are the best and most competitive in the world and that are being held back because of this. NDP members should stand and say they do not like the deal, that they think it is bad, and continue on with their misleading rhetoric if they want. But I would ask that they do the democratic thing and allow it to come to a vote .

When I was in Colombia a number of years ago I was standing in a tourist area marketplace. I was trying to exchange my money at a cash machine and it was not working. Two young women who were probably in their twenties told me that the machines in the tourist area did not work but there was one in the commercial area a few blocks away which they offered to take me to. I have to say there was a tinge of suspicion. I thought maybe they would want a tip for their work, and that I would be leaving that particular area and going into the commercial area. However, they looked trustworthy and they took me a few blocks away to a local bank and showed me the machine and helped with the instructions which of course were not in English. They stood back while I put my card in so they could not read my PIN number. I got my cash. I offered them some money for their help and they refused but asked if I could find my way back to the area I had just left. I said I thought I could. They said that I was probably wondering why they did this. I said to be honest I thought they would want some money for giving me directions and I would have been pleased to give them that. They asked if I was from the United States. I said that actually I was from Canada. They said that probably did not make any difference. They said that I had probably heard about all of the narcotics and the devastating revolutionary activity in Colombia. I said that of course I had. They wanted me to know that most Colombians are decent, hard-working people who just want a chance to prove themselves and move ahead, and that is the message they left with me.

I do not know who those two university students are. I did not get their names, but I would say they are two ambassadors for Colombia who did a very effective job. I would ask the NDP and others to simply let the majority of decent, hard-working people who live in Colombia have a chance to move ahead. That is what we are asking for today.

• (1245)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the minister back in the House. I will be charitable and say he must be somewhat disoriented after being away for a few months because in his entire speech he was not able to get any facts right at all. As human rights organizations have indicated, the death rate in Colombia is going up, not going down. In fact there

were 18% more murders of trade unionists last year than there were in the previous year.

My colleague from Windsor West mentioned the number of murders that have taken place this year. It is not just the number of murders that is so worrying. It is the number of false positives by the Colombian military and the number of disappearances as the murder rate has climbed and also the number of disappearances of the Colombian union leaders and teachers who simply disappear and are never found again.

The second point that is important to mention is what is actually happening around the world. The minister spoke very vaguely about some indications of perhaps some agreements happening somewhere. As minister, he should know full well that the United States Congress has refused to ratify the Colombia trade deal. It has simply said “no”. In Norway the government pulled back and said it does not want to be seen as implicitly endorsing Uribe's government. Britain has stopped providing training and support to government security forces. These governments are doing the responsible thing.

Why are the Conservatives endorsing murder by trying to push this trade deal through?

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has clearly been caught in the headlights of his own glaringly ridiculous rhetoric. He is still trying to avoid the fact that he continues to say, and I quote him as saying this, that if you murder someone in Colombia, the free trade agreement says you will be fined for that. The member has not yet apologized for that. He has not yet said, “Okay, I got a little carried away. Sorry, it does not say that”. Until he does that, I will question everything he brings forward.

It is one thing to feel passionate about something, as the member does. It is one thing to vigorously debate, albeit with false information, but when the president of Colombia was here and in an unprecedented way went to that committee to answer questions, the member brought out this horrifically misleading information. President Uribe asked just one thing. He asked the member, if, simply out of respect, he would look him in the eye when he brought forward those false allegations.

The member could not even look him in the eye. Would he please look us in our collective eyes, look Canadians in the eye and say, “Hey, that thing I said about the free trade agreement having a fine for murderers was not fine for me to say.” I wish he would just say that.

Then I could possibly look at his other information as possibly having a modicum of correctness to it.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for raising those issues that are very important to Canadians.

I was in Colombia when the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster was there. We raised the issues that the minister has raised about Colombia. I can say that they have made great progress on that front, and we are looking forward to this particular treaty.

*Government Orders*

For the past many years, we have not signed a single agreement with Asia or Asia-Pacific nations. What steps are being taken by the minister to make sure that we make some progress on that front as well?

• (1250)

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** Mr. Speaker, in the debate on free trade agreements, my colleague has asked a pertinent question. I appreciate that.

There are tremendous opportunities throughout Asia. We are doing a number of things to pursue those opportunities. We are working hard on expanded trade agreements, for instance in China and India.

My colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, just presided over the opening of yet another trade office in India about a week ago and also represented Canada very well at WTO discussions going on there.

It is my hope, and I say that carefully because we do not know what is going to happen here in the next couple of weeks, that should I be able to be in India about two weeks from now, we will be opening yet another trade office there.

We are working on a foreign investment protection agreement with India. We are getting closer. It has gone back and forth a number of times. We are working on a nuclear cooperation agreement with China. We are also pursuing similar initiatives.

I will use one example and then I will close on this. The former minister of trade in India expressed India's concern about their agriculture which is mostly subsistence-level farming competing against an industrialized country like Canada which has a very mature and sophisticated agricultural industry. India does not want to embark on a full and formal free trade agreement. They are open to enhanced trade.

We look at the areas where we can improve, and though a free trade agreement may not be imminent we are able to expand our trade opportunities with many of these Asian countries.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for recognizing me in this discussion of the implementation of the free trade agreement between Canada and Colombia.

I feel that this debate is very important because we do not all agree by any means with this treaty, neither the members of the House nor the people of Canada and Colombia. The government will not change its mind as a result of this debate, but at least it will not be able to pretend it did not know what parliamentarians really think.

We are still wondering whether the government is paying any attention to what we say. Even though I was not yet in the House a year ago, I know that the international trade committee submitted a report on the free trade agreement with a number of recommendations. As a member of this committee now, I would like some assurances that the government read the report and responded to it. But that still has not been done.

It seems, unfortunately, that the Conservative government has turned a deaf ear and wants to proceed with this agreement even though there is a total lack of conditions conducive to it.

We tried in vain to find some valid reasons for signing such an agreement. There are none. The Conservatives and Liberals alike have only one argument to make: free trade brings prosperity.

No one is against prosperity, of course, but it is wrong to think it can be achieved by signing bilateral agreements without any serious criteria.

Whenever we enter bilateral trade agreements, we should familiarize ourselves with the realities of the countries with which we are dealing. We should take the time to assess the consequences of our decisions, both within Canada and within our partner, and not just from a commercial point of view.

In the case of Colombia, it turns out that the effect on trade between our two countries will be negligible in comparison with the damage that could be done to Colombia's ability to defend the interests of its own people. Even the prosperity argument collapses if we take a close look at who will really benefit from an increase in exports.

The connection between free trade and the common weal has never proved completely true. Any positive impact of an increase in exports on the standard of living and human rights in Colombia is debatable. Some Colombian organizations tell us that their country's auditor general stated just a few years ago that half of the arable land belonged directly to the paramilitary and drug traffickers.

We need, therefore, to be aware of the current situation in Colombia and take it into consideration. In addition to the opinions of some of my colleagues, who went personally to see the conditions there, we also have the stories of many eye witnesses, Colombian citizens, who have told us about their experiences. Their stories are very troubling and very moving. These people have to deal every day with the violence, the lack of freedom of speech, and the absence of the most basic of human rights.

As a farmer myself with a background in the farm movement, a shiver runs down my back at the thought that at this very moment, trade unionists in Colombia are being attacked and are targeted simply because they continue to assert the rights of working people. There are still people today in Colombia who pay with their lives for their determination to fight for their rights.

We must remember that armed conflicts often occur in rural areas, in more remote areas where the inhabitants are often dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. In these regions, the conflict consists of armed struggles for control over the land and the resources and its severity has led to the displacement of populations. Currently, there are four million displaced people in the country. Many people are forced to abandon their homes and land and arrive in the city without work and destined to live a precarious life.

*Government Orders*

●(1255)

Contrary to what some may think, free trade is not always welcomed by the agricultural sector. For small farmers in Colombia, an increase in trade also means an increase in imports. The free trade agreement with Canada, which provides for the immediate elimination of duties on wheat, peas, lentils and barley, among others, would be devastating for Colombian agriculture, which accounts for 11.4% of GDP and 22% of employment in Colombia.

Some organizations, such as the Canadian Council for International Co-operation maintain that, as a result of the free trade agreement with Canada, “12,000 livelihoods will be undermined by Canada’s industrially-produced wheat and barley exports” and that “the value of domestic wheat production in Colombia is expected to drop by 32%, leading to losses of 44% in employment levels and wages”. That is the real situation.

Another potential consequence of the competition and the progressive loss of market share is that it will favour the establishment of coca plantations because coca is becoming the only product with a strong export market which, unfortunately, remains profitable.

The sale of coca, and consequently drug trafficking, guerillas, paramilitary forces, the ties to power, corruption and so forth, this is a cycle that is difficult to break and one that victimizes the innocent. Colombia must adopt the means to break this cycle and Canada can help. However, in our opinion, a free trade agreement is not the route to go.

The agreement before us has some serious shortcomings and goes beyond a decrease in customs tariffs. This agreement reproduces the chapter on protection of investments from NAFTA. The many lawsuits that have been filed by investors against governments should have taught us that this chapter should be revised, or even withdrawn from NAFTA, or at least should not be reused in other trade agreements. But with this, various foreign investors will have a number of advantages and the state's power to legislate for the well-being of its people will suffer as a result. Thus, in the current context of systematic violations of human, labour and environmental rights, the investors will have powers that will only serve to make certain already disadvantaged groups even weaker, and will eventually eat away at democracy.

It can obviously be interesting for Canada to have this investment protection provision. In fact, Canadian businesses operating in Colombia will benefit from strong protection of their investments through this free trade agreement. This agreement will allow Canadian companies involved in mining, for instance, and whose human rights record is less than stellar to sue the Colombian government, should it ever implement legislation that affects their profits. Substantial compensation is provided for in the event of nationalization or expropriation. In other words, the power to legislate as it sees fit within its jurisdiction is taken away from the state.

In Quebec, we now have a fine example of a company abusing power that is suing the Government of Quebec, because the government decided to prohibit a type of pesticide in an effort to protect the health of Quebecers. I think this is an inconceivable

situation. In regards to the agreement with Colombia, what would Canadian mining companies do if the Colombian government decided to improve some national labour standards? Would they sue the Colombian government because the implementation of this law would cost the company money and would decrease profits? This could happen. The Canadian government has the means to better regulate the activities of Canadian companies operating abroad, but it does not do so.

●(1300)

Once again, it is clear that the government has chosen to ignore everyone else's recommendations. Plenty of recommendations arose from the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries, but the government's response has fallen short of the mark. When asked to adopt mandatory social responsibility standards for Canadian mining companies abroad, the government decided to adopt voluntary standards instead. When asked to create an independent ombudsman who could conduct impartial investigations to validate complaints, the government created the Office of the Extractive Sector Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor, who reports directly to the minister and investigates only if authorized by the mining company. In other words, the government chose to ignore all of the recommendations it received.

The Canadian government wasted a perfectly good opportunity to truly improve the living conditions of Colombian workers. This same government says that it can help Colombians prosper simply by selling them more goods at better prices.

Of course the Colombian government is perfectly capable of passing its own laws governing mining companies operating within its territory, but enforcing such laws is something else entirely. Enforcement requires the kind of resources, infrastructure and territorial control that Colombia does not necessarily have.

We have to bear in mind that Colombia is a developing country and that it is very hard to sign trade agreements between countries as different as Canada and Colombia.

Every time we talk to people involved in social movements in Colombia, we are amazed by the stories of brave men and women who carry on fighting despite the threat of assassination. Last February, my Bloc Québécois colleagues and I met with the coalition of Colombian social movements and organizations, which includes several human rights protection organizations operating at various levels. It took a lot of courage for members of the coalition to come to Canada, hoping to raise awareness of their plight among Quebec and Canadian MPs.

Closer to me, last week, at my constituency office, I personally met with six Colombians, including a couple who had left four of their children behind in Colombia and lost track of them. They were crying and asking what I could do to help them find out what happened to them and bring them to Canada so that they can have some kind of family life.

*Government Orders*

That is the sort of thing Colombians are going through, as I have learned firsthand in recent weeks. My meeting with these people was both absolutely amazing and incredibly depressing. I think that, as members of Parliament and parliamentarians, we have to do everything in our power to lend them a helping hand, so that humanitarian conditions in a country like Colombia can improve.

Mark my words. These people who have every interest in seeing life improve in Colombia came to us, asking that we not support that free trade agreement. Canada's stand on this issue is of great importance, not so much commercially as morally, to them who are very interested in and affected by it.

Everyone in this House should clearly understand that, with our vote for or against this bill, we will send a message to Colombia and to the rest of the world as well.

It is clear in the Bloc Québécois's mind that this message should be: we will not sign any preferential trade agreement when there is a risk of making an already precarious situation, in terms of working conditions and the environment, deteriorate further and when there is not a minimum level of respect for human rights.

• (1305)

That is the least Canada should require of its trading partners.

To all those who say that our approach would isolate rather than help Colombia, we say that, on the contrary, trade between these two countries will continue and that even without a free trade agreement, the flow of trade between the two countries has increased. So why is the government bound, bent and determined to make Colombia a preferred trade partner? The figures show fairly limited trade between the two countries. Quebec and Canada do business with a number of other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that would be better placed than Colombia to become a preferred partner. Why Colombia? Why stubbornly go ahead with a proposal that is causing so much controversy here and elsewhere?

The only possible answer we can see is that the Government of Canada is determined to protect its investors abroad, at the expense of the local population's well-being.

Another factor we must not overlook is the environmental impact. The environmental side agreement falls far short of the expectations of those who are concerned about meeting environmental standards. This agreement does not provide for any sanctions for non-compliance with the most minimal requirements and could ultimately cause Colombia not to go ahead with adopting new environmental protection measures. The report of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation states "The ESA not only fails to provide a credible vehicle for enhancing and enforcing environmental laws and regulations, but it also fails to mitigate the corrosive pressures the CCFTA will exert on existing environmental and conservation measures and may in fact provide a further disincentive for environmental law reform." That is deeply concerning.

Given all this information and all these concerns about the signing of this free trade agreement, we are opposed to it.

In addition, the Conservative government's approach in negotiating with Colombia showed contempt for our democratic institutions

and this Parliament. At the time when the agreement was made public, a study on the subject matter was under way at the Standing Committee on International Trade. The opinion of elected parliamentarians was never taken into consideration as part of the discussions between our two countries.

This prompted the Bloc Québécois to introduce in this House a motion asking that "the House refuse to give second reading to Bill C-23, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Colombia and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, because the government concluded the agreement while the Standing Committee on International Trade was considering the matter, thereby demonstrating its disrespect for democratic institutions".

Unfortunately, in spite of all the points we raised and all the evidence suggesting that this trade agreement is not a desirable one, it would seem that the Liberal members are still unable to state clearly what position they will take on the issue. Based on what we heard Liberal members of the Standing Committee on International Trade say, however, we would think that they are aware of many problems in Colombia that such an agreement might make worse. They even expressed concerns about President Uribe's plans to change the country's Constitution to secure a third mandate as president. I wonder what more they need to check before finally opposing this agreement. The facts speak for themselves. Refusing to accept them will not make them any less true.

• (1310)

[English]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House today to speak to the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

Listening to the debate there is obviously a divergence of views in the chamber. The minister made an important point that is worth repeating and which I will probably repeat a couple of times in my intervention today.

It is worth repeating that this is not a brand new agreement. It is not an agreement that was just tabled before the House and laid in front of all the members. This agreement has been in the informal stages of negotiations since 2002-03 and has been a formal agreement since 2007. It passed through the chamber. The committee actually went to Colombia and heard first-hand from Colombians in all parts of the country. Whether they were people involved in commercial businesses or government organizations, whether they were NGOs or they represented the International Labour Organization, we heard from dozens and dozens of Colombians.

We walked the streets of Bogota, Colombia which a few years ago would have been unsafe. I think Colombia has made great strides and that a good portion of that forward momentum is the direct result of increased trading links with the rest of the world.

*Government Orders*

However, for some reason or another, we have two parties in the chamber that want to condemn the Colombians for actually moving forward and advancing their own country.

This agreement is an important part of our Conservative government's strategy to make the Canadian economy stronger. In these difficult economic times, it is important to keep doors open in the region and around the world for our producers and our exporters. Our government has provided leadership internationally in encouraging free trade and open markets and discouraging protectionism. Our government knows that trade and investment agreements play a critical role in creating new opportunities for companies and helping the global economy recover.

That is why we are committed to an aggressive trade agenda in the Americas and beyond. The Canada-Colombia free trade agreement, along with the related agreements on the environment and labour co-operation, is an important part of this broader trade agenda.

Canada currently has long-standing free trade agreements in force with the United States and Mexico under the NAFTA agreement, as well as agreements with Israel, Chile and Costa Rica. Under this government, we have very recently implemented new free trade agreements with the European Free Trade Association and Peru on July 1 and August 1 respectively.

Earlier this year, Canada also signed a free trade agreement with Jordan and, of course, this free trade agreement that we are currently debating here in the House of Commons with Colombia.

On August 11 our government successfully concluded free trade negotiations with Panama. At the announcement of the conclusion of these negotiations, the Prime Minister emphasized our government's commitment to strong trading relationships and partnerships.

We are also looking ahead to other important partners around the world. At the Canada-European Union summit in May our government launched negotiations toward a comprehensive economic and trade agreement and on Friday the Minister of International Trade met with a group of trade ministers from the Caribbean communities to discuss the way forward for our trade negotiations with them.

Those are yet further examples of how hard this government is working to pursue bilateral and multilateral trading relationships that work for Canadians.

We also remain dedicated to advancing our ongoing free trade negotiations with other partners, including South Korea, Singapore, Central American countries and the Dominican Republic.

Our trade agenda will continue to be ambitious. We have started exploring deeper ties with India and Morocco and are currently involved in technical discussions with Japan.

What does this very active trade agenda mean for Canada? To be more concrete, let us take a look in more detail at just some of what we have achieved so far this year.

● (1315)

The bottom line of what this ambitious trade agenda means is jobs, opportunity, more exports, more products for Canadians and

more choice for consumers. It would not only help Canadians but it would help other nations that become our closer trading partners.

The Canada-EFTA Free Trade Agreement is a first generation agreement with an emphasis on tariff elimination. Implementing this agreement, the first free trade agreement Canada has ever completed with European countries, will open more doors for Canadian producers and exporters by increasing their access to these wealthy and sophisticated European markets.

Canada's producers and exporters will benefit immediately from the elimination of duties on all Canadian non-agriculture merchandise exports upon the coming into force of the free trade agreement. Tariffs will also be eliminated or reduced on selected Canadian agricultural exports such as durum wheat, frozen french fries, beer and crude canola oil. As well, Canadian companies will be able to access innovative technologies and other inputs from EFTA markets, including through the importation of machinery and scientific and precision instruments.

With the Canada-Peru Free Trade Agreement, there are also considerable benefits for Canadians. Canadian producers will benefit from Peru's immediate elimination of tariffs on 95% of current Canadian exports, with most remaining tariffs to be eliminated over a five to ten year period. Products that will receive immediate duty-free access to Peru include wheat, barley, lentils, peas and selected boneless beef cuts, a variety of paper products, and machinery and equipment.

This agreement also provides enhanced market access in service sectors that are of interest to Canada, including mining, energy and professional services. Canada's banking, insurance and security sector will also benefit from the greater access to the Peruvian marketplace.

The free trade, labour co-operation and environment agreements signed with Jordan in June of this year are not yet in force but the legislation will be forthcoming. We can still look at what the free trade agreement will offer Canadian producers once implemented.

The Canada-Jordan free trade agreement would eliminate tariffs on over 99% of recent Canadian exports by value to Jordan, directly benefiting Canadian producers and exporters. Key Canadian sectors that would benefit from this immediate duty-free access include forestry, manufacturing and agriculture and agri-food sectors in which Canadian companies are global leaders.

*Government Orders*

The free trade agreement with Jordan would improve market access for both agricultural and industrial goods and help to ensure a level playing field for Canadian exporters vis-à-vis competitors that currently benefit from preferential access to Jordan's market. The parallel labour and environmental agreements would help to ensure progress on labour rights and environmental protection.

It is simple: By bringing down barriers to trade and investment, the Conservative government will help Canada's business compete in an ever more competitive world and stimulate the Canadian economy.

A closer economic partnership with Colombia would similarly reduce tariffs for Canadian exporters. The Canada-Colombia free trade agreement would also expand opportunities for Canadian investors and service providers. This agreement would also help Colombia build a more prosperous, equitable and secure democracy, a democracy that can contribute to growth and economic stability in the region.

From the start of the global economic downturn, our message has been clear. Ensuring free and open trade is vital to the international effort of strengthening the global economy. Canadians can count on their government to lead these efforts and to take every opportunity to oppose protectionism and defend free and open trade on the world stage. They can also depend upon our efforts to help Canadians through and beyond the current economic difficulties.

Protectionism is not the answer and it has never been the answer. Partnerships and reaching out in a broader trading agenda are at least part of that answer. This is why I ask for the support of all hon. members for the Colombia-Canada free trade agreement.

I have a bit of time left and there are a couple of things that have been hinted at in debate. Some of them were discussed in a little more detail, but it is important for all members of this House to take a look at the Uribe government.

● (1320)

When we were in Colombia with the committee, we were granted an audience with President Uribe and his entire cabinet. Those audiences seldom ever occur, even when free trade agreements are being negotiated. We had a very open, frank discussion about politics, free trade and the challenges Colombia is facing.

I would ask all members to take a look at President Uribe's cabinet and the president's own background. They face formidable obstacles and challenges in Colombia, but everything that has occurred in Colombia under President Uribe's watch has been positive. I know some will take exception to that statement, but it has been extremely positive.

The president witnessed violence first-hand as a young child. Many of his cabinet members have been kidnapped by FARC and some were held for a year and a half or three years. Others have been kidnapped by the right-wing paramilitaries. His cabinet is not made up of right-wing ideologues, which the opposition continually wants us to believe. That is far from the truth. He actually was able to reach into Colombian society and draw people from all over the political spectrum to his party and his cause. That is an accomplishment that not many people can match.

The reason is very clear and simple: Colombians wanted to get out of the dire straits they saw their country in. They wanted to have personal safety and the ability to travel throughout the country. The roads were not safe. They wanted to have some type of police presence that would avoid the continuing kidnappings; not that they do not still occur, because they do still occur, but there are markedly fewer than there were even a few years ago.

The politically motivated murders have decreased, not increased. We have seen better labour standards brought into place because of that government. We have seen a better adherence to the justice system because of that government. There are safer streets and highways and freedom of travel in Colombia that did not exist 10 years ago. It was absolutely impossible to travel between communities and cities in Colombia without jeopardizing one's life.

Why did Canada negotiate a free trade agreement with Colombia? It will open new markets and export opportunities for Canadian companies and will supply Canadian jobs. We have to do that because other countries are already ahead of us. As the minister said, we believe that the United States will be opening up its agreement very quickly to deal with the Colombians. The EFTA countries have signed an agreement with Colombia. The European Union is looking at signing an agreement with Colombia.

It should be noted that none of these agreements have the same level of labour and environmental parallel clauses that our Canadian agreement has. Ours is far superior and far more protective of labour and the environment than any free trade agreement by any other country in the world. It is important.

Even though our present level of bilateral trade with Colombia is fairly low at around \$1.2 billion, that trade is growing exponentially. We have tremendous opportunity not just in Colombia but throughout South America, Central America and the Caribbean.

When our government came to power in 2006, we had a time of opportunity in this country with a very robust trading arrangement with the United States of America and Mexico in the NAFTA agreement that allowed for good times. That trading agreement is under more pressure today because of the worldwide economic downturn. That trading agreement has been threatened from all sides.

● (1325)

What was our government's answer? We looked beyond our immediate borders and, quite frankly, we followed the money. Canadian foreign direct investment in the Americas was already there ahead of us. Canadian companies, whether in the extractive sector, whether in agriculture, whether in manufacturing, were already in South America, Central America and the Caribbean with a tremendous amount of Canadian foreign direct investment. We followed that investment.

We are seeking not just opportunities. I do not want this to sound callous and that it is simply about Canada. It is absolutely about Canada, but there are also tremendous benefits for the countries with which we are signing these agreements.

*Government Orders*

Why would we not look at the Americas, our neighbours, those in the same hemisphere and the same time zones? Why would we not look for enhanced trading relationships in Central America?

Why would we not look at the opportunities for growth and the opportunities that our political cousins in the Americas are facing in Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras? These countries have huge, growing economies. They have huge populations. They have great challenges. They have tremendous poverty. The only way for them to move forward is to trade with the rest of the world. They have to seek beneficial, comprehensive trading agreements.

The Liberal critic asked a question earlier about rules based trading. It is a very simple concept. Rules are in place that apply both to Canada and to the country being traded with for the benefit of both, for the protection of investment by both countries.

There are a number of issues and a number of them have already been spoken about. The extractive sector continually comes up in the discussion on free trade with Colombia. For a few moments I would like to talk about the Canadian extractive sector.

Our extractive sector is absolutely a world leader. Canada represents about 40% of the mining business around the world. Canadian companies operate in 148 countries. We are the preferred operator.

I was privileged to be at the WTO in India and I spoke to the minister of trade from Ecuador. The first comment was that Ecuador wants to work with Canada.

We have a big extractive sector. Canadians respect the environment, respect the rules and respect labour. We have great companies doing great work. We continually hear negative comments. We continually hear NGOs saying that none of this occurs. We should be extremely proud of the work that our companies are doing around the globe. There are companies from every province in Canada and they are doing good work.

We should be reaching out beyond our closest neighbours and outside the NAFTA agreement. We should be looking at the European Union and places like India and China and places in our own hemisphere such as South America, Central America and the Caribbean where there are tremendous opportunities for Canadian trade, for Canadian jobs, and for Canadian security. At the same time we will benefit our neighbours and our trading partners who desperately need the foreign currency and the market.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my Conservative colleague. As always, the Conservatives—and I find this terrible and extremely dangerous—present only part of the facts to try to sell their proposal.

My colleague is singing the praise of the Uribe government in Colombia when it is clear that crimes committed by paramilitary groups increased by 41% in 2008, compared to 14% in 2007. Over 30 members of Congress are currently under arrest, and they are generally close to the president. Crimes committed by the country's security forces have increased by more than 9%. Since 1990, 2,690 trade unionists have died, including 39 in 2007 and 46 in 2008.

According to the U.S. State Department, nearly 3,500 people will be displaced.

I would like my colleague to comment on those figures.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question because it is particularly important, when talking about numbers and facts, that one has all of the numbers and facts.

Without question, Colombia is still a dangerous country. It still has tremendous challenges. It takes a different point of view to see where it was 10 years ago, 5 years ago or 2 years ago. Without question, Colombia is headed in the right direction.

Between 2002 and 2008, kidnappings decreased by 87%. The 13% that are still occurring are unacceptable, but kidnappings have decreased by 87%. That country is moving in the right direction. Homicide rates have dropped by 44%.

Does Colombia still have a lot of violence in the country? Absolutely, it does. Is it diminishing? Yes, it is. Moderate poverty has fallen from 55% to 45%. All of the signals are headed in the right direction. Life and security are improving for Colombians.

• (1335)

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague from South Shore—St. Margaret's realizes what his comments sound like when he says that we should be embarking on a free trade agreement with Colombia because Colombians are killing people with less frequency, speed and rapidity than they used to.

My good friend and colleague, Dick Martin, who is no relation, was the president of the United Steelworkers Local 6166 in Thompson, Manitoba. He became the head of the Federation of Labour in Manitoba and then became the head of ORIT, which is the organization of trade unions for Central and South America.

Dick Martin went to Colombia a number of times and came back with firsthand reports of the wholesale mass assassination of trade union leaders in that country. The total figure, and I am not exaggerating, was 3,200 murders: the head of the teachers' union, the head of the carpenters' union, the head of the steelworkers' union, the head of the miners' union, and on and on. These people were shot in their driveways as they left their homes by government-sponsored hit squads. And the Conservatives want to enter into a trade agreement with that country.

Trade with Canada is not a right, it is a privilege. Colombia has to deserve the privilege to be in a free trade agreement with this country. Its behaviour, the experience and empirical evidence is such that we should be boycotting Colombia, never mind entering into a free trade agreement with that country.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, after that outburst, I am almost at a loss for words.

*Government Orders*

The first answer is quite simple. The NDP is not supporting this free trade agreement. It has never supported any free trade agreement. The NDP has no intention of ever supporting a free trade agreement. It is as simple as that.

The NDP will take whatever numbers, statistics and facts it can find along the way and twist them into some type of a warped little package to support what its members are saying. I really do take exception to that because I know exactly what I am talking about and exactly why we should be moving forward on trade with Colombia and other nations around the globe.

The member talked about labour rights. This specific agreement is accompanied by the labour co-operation agreement, which commits all parties to respect and enforce standards such as the freedom of association, the right to bargain collectively and the elimination of child labour. It commits parties to provide protections for occupational safety and health, employment standards such as minimum wages, overtime pay, and non-discrimination. It goes on and on.

It is supported, by the way, by the International Labour Organization, which has an office open in Colombia today. It has a full-time presence in Colombia. It is constantly inspecting the agreement.

We have promoted labour rights and environmental rights. Is the situation in Colombia perfect? No one is saying that. No one is attempting to say that. Is the situation improving and headed in the right direction and will we end up with a better Colombia down the road because of this agreement? I truly believe we will.

It is embarrassing that the NDP cannot separate the wheat from the chaff in this agreement and agree with the good things that will come out of it.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in June 2008, the Standing Committee on International Trade recommended that legal provisions be added to the agreement to force Canadian companies working there—mining companies—to act responsibly towards local populations with respect to human rights, the environment and sustainable development.

The government's response to the national roundtable recommendations is inadequate. At present, complaints are only filed with the Office of the Extractive Sector Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor if the mining company agrees to such a request.

Could my colleague on the other side of the floor talk about this and explain how the government would proceed if there were a problem in a remote area in Colombia?

• (1340)

[*English*]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Again, Mr. Speaker, this is a totally separate debate from this discussion, but the part of the debate in which the member wants to engage is a whole question about extraterritoriality.

The Canadian government is not the sovereign government in Colombia or in any other country with which we do business, nor should it be. We deal professionally with political governments around the world. Our mining companies, as I said earlier, have

some of the highest standards of corporate social responsibility of any group in the extractive sector. They are the companies that most countries want to attract, because of those standards of corporate social responsibility.

We encourage our extractive sector and Canadian business community in the development and implementation of corporate social responsibility initiatives, including involving local labour unions and local NGOs. We support the extractive industry's transparency initiative, which supports governance and transparency in developing countries through the full publication and verification of company payments and government revenues for oil, gas and mining industries.

We have put a number of checks and balances in place to make sure not only that Canadian companies quite frankly talk the talk, but that they also walk the walk, respecting the full political rights of other countries. We would not want some other country telling Canada what to do, nor do we want to be in the position of telling them what they should be doing.

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this debate should not be about ideology, it should be about people: the people of Colombia whose lives have been ripped apart and turned upside down by civil war and narcopolitics. The good, decent and proud people of Colombia deserve a better future and the kind of economic opportunities provided by legitimate trade.

Colombia has made real economic, social and security progress in recent years, but it is a fragile progress, under the constant threat of FARC terrorists, drug gangsters and hostile attacks from the Chavez regime in Venezuela.

Colombia's external trade has helped real people piece their lives back together despite these threats. These are people I met, like Valentina, who lived on her family's farm until 10 years ago when FARC murdered her brother and drove her family off the farm. Valentina now works in the flower trade and helps to provide food and a home for her family.

I met Maria who was pregnant with her first baby 14 years ago when FARC murdered her brother and mother and took their farm. Maria and her three children and husband now live in a house they own because of exports and a housing subsidy from her Colombian employer. Maria dreams of her children getting the education that war and narcoterrorism have denied her.

Carlos became a member of the paramilitary because it was the only clear economic opportunity he had as a youth. His violent life in the paramilitary fuelled by drug money was cut short when an ambush attack rendered him a paraplegic. Today, as part of the Uribe government's paramilitary demobilization efforts, Carlos is now involved in peace and reconciliation and he is getting an education.

Carlos told me he believes the FTA agreement with Canada is needed to give young Colombians legitimate economic opportunities, which he was denied, to save them from the violence of the narco-economy.



It is about people like Gerardo Sánchez, Luis Fernando, Walter Navarro, Colombian union leaders who support the FTA with Canada and believe it will be good for Canada, good for Colombia and good for their union members.

Colombia is a country with good people, tremendous natural beauty and resources. It is a good country where things have gone terribly wrong for over 40 years. It has been paralyzed and divided by a civil war that began along ideological lines, but it has more recently evolved to a narcowar with no ideological fault lines, only greed, desperation and violence.

Since 2002, there has been tremendous progress. Progress has been made particularly in terms of security. Eight years ago people were afraid to walk the streets of Bogotá and 400 municipalities were controlled by FARC.

There needs to be more progress, but the progress has been steady. The Uribe government's progress on security is one of the reasons it enjoys a 60% approval rating. Success is not where one is at, it is how far one has gone from where one started. Based on any reasonable analysis, the Uribe government has made progress.

Still, more needs to be done in Colombia, and they need our help. To paraphrase Edmund Burke, evil flourishes when good people do nothing.

If we refuse to engage a country like Colombia that is making progress, where civil society leaders, unions and government and victims of both paramilitary and FARC guerilla violence are all trying to move forward, and if we isolate Colombia in the Andean region and leave Colombia exposed and vulnerable to the unilateral and ideological attacks of Chavez's Venezuela, we will be allowing evil to flourish.

Canadians, as good people, cannot morally justify doing nothing. If any member of Parliament or any Canadian is concerned about human rights in Colombia, we have an obligation to engage Colombia more deeply.

The FTA establishes an ongoing rules-based system to monitor and help govern and improve labour rights, human rights and environmental progress in Colombia. Labour rights and labour rights issues in Colombia have occurred in the absence of a free trade agreement. There is already a commercial relationship between Canada and Colombia, but there is little in terms of a rules-based system to guide that relationship.

SNC-Lavalin just opened up an office in Bogota. Brookfield Asset Management recently established a \$500 million fund to invest in Colombia. Again, this is occurring outside of a robust rules-based trade agreement.

The question we must ask ourselves as Canadians is how a new free trade agreement, with the most robust labour and environmental provisions of any trade agreement that Canada has ever signed, can do anything but strengthen our capacity to positively influence human rights and labour rights in Colombia.

• (1345)

In late August the member for Toronto Centre and I completed a four-day visit to Colombia. We met with civil society groups, union

### *Government Orders*

leaders, trade industry representatives, UN and OAS officials. We met with senators, economists, think tanks, as well as President Uribe and members of his cabinet. We visited a flower production facility and a project supported by MAPP-OAS, Mission to Support the Peace Process, an OAS organization in Medellin. We met with both supporters and opponents of the free trade agreement, and we sought out both sides of the debate.

On balance, most individuals and groups, including human rights NGOs, believe in the ratification of the free trade agreement with Canada. They do not believe this agreement would have a negative impact on economic or human rights conditions in Colombia. Many believe the agreement could in fact improve Canada's monitoring of labour and indigenous rights through its rules-based framework and the two side agreements on labour and the environment.

We saw first-hand the challenges faced by the Uribe government in its fight against drug production and trafficking, the FARC and emerging criminal gangs.

We met with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights representative, Christian Salazar. We discussed with Mr. Salazar cases of false positives or extrajudicial executions. He told us how the UNHCHR is working with the ministry of defence towards establishing an independent monitoring system to help uncover other possible cases and prevent future ones. He told us how violence against trade unionists has decreased significantly over the last three years with the demobilization of paramilitary groups. In his view the Colombian government has made progress in its fight against impunity by increasing the number of cases being investigated. At the same time he cautioned us about former paramilitary members regrouping into criminal groups. He welcomes the Colombian government's recent invitation to participate in the investigation of these criminal groups.

We met with members of the second commission on international affairs of the senate. Some senators were in favour and some were against the FTA, which frankly demonstrates that Colombia has a well-functioning democracy.

*Government Orders*

We heard from Senator Pinaque. He occupies one of the senate seats reserved under the constitution for indigenous representatives, which is more than we do in Canada for indigenous peoples. He expressed concerns that he has not seen economic progress for indigenous people in Colombia. The concerns he expressed were legitimate, the same concerns we hear in Canada from aboriginal and first nations people: the need to ensure that economic progress comes with equitable distribution. These are the kinds of concerns we are dealing with in Canada as we ensure that first nations and aboriginal communities are full partners in developing resources in Canada. Frankly the challenges we face in Canada around economic engagement of our aboriginal and first nations communities are the kinds of co-operation and dialogue that could benefit both Colombia and Canada. We both face similar challenges on how to ensure that economic growth happens equitably and is shared with our first nations people.

The majority of the senators we met with expressed confidence that the FTA with Canada would help create jobs and prosperity for Colombians. The agreement would help Colombian producers who export to Canada while lowering import costs for all producers, especially the manufacturing sector.

One senator from Cúcuta on the Venezuelan border stressed the need for Colombia to diversify its trade relationships beyond Venezuela and Ecuador in order to mitigate the risk, particularly from Venezuela and the Chavez regime, of shutting its borders unilaterally and ideologically to Colombian exports. Canada faces a similar need to diversify our trade relationships, but for different reasons. We simply cannot isolate Colombia in the Andean region with the Chavez regime being as dangerous as it is.

Most of the senators felt that the FTA would improve labour conditions in Colombia through increased investment and economic engagement with Canada. They see Canada as a positive force. They believe that Canadian companies have been strong practitioners of corporate social responsibility, and they believe there has been progress in the protection of unionized workers and their leaders. Eighteen hundred union leaders are currently under special protection, full-time security provided by the Government of Colombia.

• (1350)

There has been progress in the disarming of paramilitary groups. There has been a reduction in violence overall and specifically violence toward trade unionists. The senators also spoke to us about the tripartite commission in Colombia that is made up of government, unions and employers. This commission, under the supervision of the ILO, is helping Colombia comply with its international labour the ILO commitments. At the 2009 annual meeting of the ILO, the ILO noted that progress is being made in Colombia.

Finally and most importantly, most senators acknowledged that a FTA with Canada would strengthen and improve living conditions in Colombia. It would help reduce poverty, prevent the resurgence of illegal armed groups, and help prevent more Colombians from entering the narco-economy.

We met with a group of Colombian economists who spoke in favour of a rules-based free trade agreement with Canada. They

emphasized Colombia's need to move forward with this FTA, particularly now that countries like Chile and Peru have successfully ratified FTAs with key trading partners of Colombia including Canada. They stressed the importance for Colombia to diversify its trade relationships, again away from countries like Hugo Chavez' Venezuela. The Chavez threat to Colombia was a common theme repeated to us throughout our meetings in Colombia. We also learned that FARC guerrillas are increasingly being based in Venezuela, that they are being harboured by the Chavez regime to continue their attacks on Colombia and on companies and individuals in Colombia.

The labour movement is supported, in fact, by several private sector unions in Colombia. The labour movement in Colombia represents 6% of the workforce and the opposition to this agreement largely comes from the public sector components of that labour movement. As such, these public sector union members in Colombia have nothing to lose in pursuing an ideologically rigid anti-free trade position, but those who have the most to gain from the FTA are the workers currently in the informal economy which represents 56% of the labour force. These Colombians may be able to join the formal economy if Colombia's exports and foreign direct investment continue to grow.

There is general agreement among the economists that the security situation in Colombia has improved dramatically under the Uribe government and that the demobilization of paramilitaries is on track. During our trip to Colombia, we met with civil society groups focused on human rights. We heard concerns about former paramilitary members in Colombia now reorganizing as criminal gangs involved in the drug trade. We met with a representative from Colombia's national indigenous organization who spoke about the need for greater consultation with indigenous communities over investment and free trade, and the protection of biodiversity.

Human rights groups told us that Canada's FTA with Colombia needs to be robust in areas of labour rights. During our trip, we met with union leaders and industry representatives. We learned that much of the narco-trafficking is in large cause because in poor parts of Colombia, particularly in rural communities, there is no other opportunity but the narco-economy and that legitimate trade opportunity is required. Many Colombians feel that the FTAs will lead to work in the legal economy, that trade is the best way to move Colombia forward. They believe that FTAs will not only lead to increased protection of Canadian investment but also increase protection for Colombian workers.

We met with Canadian private sector firms regarding corporate social responsibility. They view the FTA with Colombia as not just protecting Canadian investment but in improving their capacity to effect positive change as Canadian practitioners of corporate social responsibility in Colombia. Our mining and extraction companies in Colombia are guided by strong principles of corporate social responsibility. Canadian companies like Enbridge have won labour safety awards. Enbridge has been recognized for human rights training that it has provided to security personnel which are required to protect its investments and its workers against FARC.

During our trip, we heard repeatedly how the involvement of Canadian corporations in the Colombian economy has raised corporate social responsibility standards in Colombia. Canadian entrepreneurs in Colombia are making a real difference in ensuring that Colombian labour standards continue to progress. The fact remains that labour laws in Colombia are actually stronger in many areas than they are in Canada.

•(1355)

The challenge is around enforcement. Colombia needs more inspectors. There are only 430 labour inspectors in the entire country, but the Canadian government is providing funding to significantly increase the number of inspectors and that needs to be a priority for us.

Unlike other countries in the region, in Colombia 85% of royalties paid by the Canadian extractive firms go back to local communities. These royalties help these communities pay for social investments like health, education, and infrastructure like roads and safe drinking water.

We met with think tanks in Colombia to discuss the challenges on peace, security and human rights including labour rights. Again, it was felt that Canada could help as a bridge builder, that there is a toxic relationship now between governments and many of the unions, organizations and the NGOs, and that Canada could in fact be a very positive bridge builder between these groups by being a responsible corporate social citizen in Colombia.

Outside Medellín we met with flower cultivation factory workers, 500 workers in fact. As part of Asocolflores, the national flower production association, this flower factory has made a huge difference in providing employment to people who need it, people who were displaced from their lands by the drug trade, people who did not have any other legitimate opportunities until this company provided them, through trade, with the opportunity to improve their living conditions and those of their families and to strengthen their security.

We met with union leaders from the private sector and public sector in Medellín. A majority of them in fact supported the FTA and viewed it as being essential to strengthening Colombia's standard of living. They characterized their views as not ideological but pragmatic, recognizing that globalization is unavoidable and a rules-based FTA such as this one with Canada can be beneficial.

We participated in a session convened by the OAS-MAPP, Mission in Support of the Peace Process with victims, ex-combatants and local institutions. We discussed the need and the important role of the OAS and Canada's support in terms of the reintegration

### *Statements by Members*

process in Colombia. Victims and ex-combatants talked about the challenges they face in returning to their communities.

Now is the time for Canadians who are sincerely concerned about the well-being of the Colombian people to economically engage them, not ideologically abandon them. Evil flourishes where good people do nothing. Legitimate trade can help the people of Colombia replace the forces of evil with the forces of hope. Now is the time for the good people of Canada to reach out to the good people of Colombia, to help them build a more peaceful, more prosperous and fairer future.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

•(1400)

[English]

### THE ECONOMY

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this summer I took the opportunity to travel to every area of Kootenay—Columbia, talking to my constituents and taking pictures with them hard at work on projects and programs funded through Canada's economic action plan.

The Conservative government has been getting shovels in the ground and projects energized for the benefit of all my constituents. We have multiplied the effect of our economic initiatives by using a very wide variety of programs. From one end of the riding to the other, I heard people voicing cautious optimism. They appreciate our economic action plan and what it means to their families and our communities throughout Kootenay—Columbia.

As we work our way out of this worldwide recession, my constituents give the Conservative government an A plus.

However, without exception, they are angry with the useless, counterproductive, dangerous, opportunistic election talk by the opposition coalition. My constituents give a massive F for failure to the Liberal, NDP and Bloc coalition.

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### DONALD MARSHALL, JR.

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, recently in August, the Mi'kmaq Nation lost a great man and reluctant hero in Donald Marshall, Jr. Affectionately known as Junior to his friends and family, Marshall was one of 13 children of Caroline and Donald Marshall, Sr., former grand chief of the Mi'kmaq Nation.

Donald Marshall, the man, was only a boy when he was wrongfully convicted of murder, a crime he did not commit. He was acquitted. A subsequent inquiry found that the system was not working for the aboriginal people.

Donald Marshall was thrust into the spotlight once again when he simply went fishing. The fishing trip resulted in the landmark Marshall ruling by the Supreme Court, upholding treaties with the Mi'kmaq people and upholding their rights and traditions.

*Statements by Members*

I attended Donald Marshall's funeral and I think the life of Donald Marshall was best outlined by Grand Chief Shawn Atleo of the Assembly of First Nations. He said that Donald Marshall was "a man who carried himself in a humble and dignified manner, a man who believed in his people".

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[*Translation*]

**TACKLING ECONOMIC CRIME**

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today the Bloc Québécois will introduce a bill designed to abolish parole after an offender has served one sixth of his sentence.

This practice allows white collar criminals who are guilty of economic crimes to get out of prison after serving only one sixth of their sentence. In effect, it turns harsh sentences into a few months in jail.

Given the economic scandals that have made the headlines in recent weeks, we must do away with this practice. The Bloc Québécois bill is simple and reflects a broad consensus. It is one of a series of measures designed to tackle economic crime. We are counting on all the parties to show good faith and help fast-track this bill starting tomorrow.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in just 83 days, the world's leaders will gather in Copenhagen to finalize an action plan on climate change. Yet, here in Canada, where is the action? The government drags its feet on concrete measures while the Arctic melts, the Prairies burn or flood, and communities suffer severe weather and unprecedented forest fires.

As emissions rise, so does regulatory risk. Investors are looking elsewhere. Our renewable energy sector flounders. Where, they ask, are the long-awaited federal targets and standards for greenhouse gases and pollutants? Where is the opportunity to review these rules?

The New Democrat climate change accountability act is now at committee. It prescribes the promised science-based achievable targets committed to by other G8 countries. It offers a framework for accountability.

Thousands of concerned Canadians have contacted their MPs seeking swift passage of this bill. They want their MPs to put the future of Canadians ahead of partisan interests.

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**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the MP for Oakville, I report back to the House of Commons today that in these challenging times the residents of Oakville are very pleased that their government is working to create jobs and build a stronger Oakville in Ontario.

Since the last budget, they are happy to see the federal government invest \$15 million to help build a new Oakville transit

facility, \$15.5 million for 1,000 long overdue parking spots at Oakville's GO station, \$8 million for a new water treatment plant, and \$15 million for Oakville's Sheridan College. They also know that there is more to come.

These investments demonstrate our government's commitment to stimulating the Ontario economy by getting shovels in the ground to create jobs for Ontarians. These projects will improve transportation efficiency, support a healthier environment, enhance local facilities and stimulate further investment.

Thanks to the hard work of our government, Oakville is on the right track for its economy to grow immediately and thrive into the future.

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● (1405)

[*Translation*]

**HONORÉ-MERCIER SECONDARY SCHOOL**

**Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud and excited to extend my congratulations to the 50 young people from École secondaire Honoré-Mercier who took part in the June launch of a CD entitled "Un chant d'espoir".

This CD of songs that the students themselves wrote and performed, with the support of artists from Nuits d'Afrique, is the culmination of a Secondary IV French project. The songs address social issues that affect these young people, who come from various cultural communities.

Julie Patenaude, who instigated the project, also deserves recognition for the work she did on the CD. Her perseverance and creativity were vital to the success of this wonderful venture and speak volumes about the quality of the teaching staff at the school.

I wish them the best of success in the coming school year.

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[*English*]

**PORTAGE PLAINS UNITED WAY**

**Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to rise and pay tribute to the Portage Plains United Way.

I was pleased to attend its kick-off luncheon last week and to see first-hand the commitment these people have to giving back to their community.

This United Way donates 100% of all funds raised to organizations in Portage la Prairie and the surrounding area. These organizations include Big Brothers and Sisters of Canada, the MS Society, the Portage Family Abuse Prevention Centre and many others.

*Statements by Members*

I want to congratulate it and wish it great success as it begins its fall fundraising campaign.

The leadership that groups like this show can set an example to all of us in the House as we begin our fall session.

Let us commit to putting the needs of Canadians above all else. Let us all commit to serving Canadians instead of asking Canadians to serve our own political agendas. I believe we can do it and Canadians deserve it.

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[*Translation*]

**DEATHS OF SOLDIERS IN AFGHANISTAN**

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay my respects for the courage and commitment of the soldiers who recently died while carrying out their duties in Afghanistan.

People were deeply saddened to hear of the deaths of Major Yannick Pépin and Corporal Jean-François Drouin, both of the 5th Regiment of Combat Engineers based in Valcartier, and of Patrick Lormand, member of the 2nd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment from Valcartier.

This terrible situation reminds us once again of the risks our soldiers are exposed to every day.

On behalf of my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I offer my sincerest condolences to the families, loved ones and colleagues of these men killed in action. I hope you will find the strength and courage needed to get through the grief you are feeling right now.

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[*English*]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week the World Economic Forum once again confirmed Canada's position as home to the world's soundest banks, backing what we have been saying all along: Canada is a model for the rest of the world. It also ranked Canada as having the ninth most competitive economy in world, a big jump from fourteenth under the previous Liberal government.

The world is taking notice. France's finance minister gushed with praise for Canada's economic stability at a recent G20 finance ministers meeting when she said:

I think...we can be inspired by...the Canadian situation. There were some people who said "I want to be Canadian."

Canadians should be proud that during these trying times other countries are looking at us with envy and admiration.

The government wants to fight the recession. The Leader of the Opposition wants to fight the recovery. This just proves that he is not in it for Canadians; he is in it for himself.

**JERRY YANOVER**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this summer Canadians lost a parliamentary treasure with the passing of Mr. Jerry Yanover.

For four decades, Jerry served as a trusted adviser to every Liberal leader and caucus. His expertise in the rules and traditions of the House, his encyclopedic knowledge of politics, his brilliant approach to strategy earned him not only the deep gratitude of Liberals, but also the genuine respect of all political parties, House officials, public servants, the media, academics and many others.

Jerry loved our system of government, respected its values and institutions and dedicated his life to making this place function at its best.

Always focused on the future, he built himself a living legacy in all the young people he encouraged to become engaged in the governance of their country.

An extraordinary mind, a tower of strength, Jerry Yanover is gone too soon. The Parliament of Canada will deeply miss one of its finest advocates.

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● (1410)

**CANADIAN FLAG**

**Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, like many Canadians, I was shocked to see the Liberal Party's latest attack on the Canadian flag.

The message that Canadians should not be proud of our flag, the symbol of our nation and our sovereignty, has no place in this country's political system. What is perhaps even more shocking is that the Liberal Party is using hard-earned tax dollars to send this offensive literature around.

Despite what some in the Liberal Party may think, Canadians still go abroad wearing our Canadian flag with pride. In fact, over 2,500 Canadian men and women are abroad in Afghanistan risking their lives daily. No wonder military families at CFB Galetown are outraged at receiving this anti-flag postcard.

It is disrespectful to the families of these men and women to imply that their loved ones should be anything but proud wearing our Canadian flag abroad, although we should not be surprised, considering the Liberal leader once referred to our Canadian flag as "a pale imitation of a beer label".

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, over the summer, constituents from my community and others from across Canada shared with me how the government's employment insurance program was failing them.

With as many as 60% of unemployed workers not qualifying for EI, in particular thousands of women, part-time and short-term employees also not meeting the qualifying criteria, it is left to the municipalities and the local community to provide a social safety net.

### Oral Questions

In communities like Windsor—Tecumseh that safety net is strained to the breaking point by the weight of the government's failed employment policies, employment policies, by the way, that have resulted in my community suffering an official unemployment rate over 15% and a real unemployment rate approaching 20%.

My community calls upon the government to take immediate action to help those unemployed and to alleviate that human suffering.

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[Translation]

#### LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition wants to trigger an election in the middle of a recession. The Liberal leader is prepared to jeopardize the economic recovery just to advance his own interests. The Liberal leader is thinking only of his political career. What a lack of wisdom. It is not surprising that the member for Papineau also thinks that his leader is lacking the necessary clarity and wisdom.

The member for Papineau said out loud what a number of his colleagues are thinking.

On this side of the House, we are rarely in agreement with the member for Papineau, but this is one exception.

The Leader of the Opposition absolutely does not have the necessary wisdom to lead Canada.

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#### FESTIVAL OF WORDS

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this weekend, on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City, an event known as Moulin à paroles was held to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham. Biz and Batlam of Loco Lacass and Brigitte Haentjens organized the event to share their perspectives on the consequences of the historic battle.

As Ms. Haentjens said, “For five centuries, words have been spoken, shouted and whispered [...] We will give those words new life; we will sing them once again”. Poet and singer Raoul Duguay described the momentous gathering as “—a victory for words. There would be no show, no rock'n'roll, without words”.

While some detractors predicted that things would get out of hand, this “literary marathon” attracted the enthusiastic participation of members of the public and everyone, both audience members and presenters, enjoyed the event. It brought people together to learn about the history and consequences of the conquest of 1759 while celebrating Quebec's literary heritage.

Thank you, and congratulations on this wonderful event.

• (1415)

[English]

#### CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have learned over the past four years that if they want to know the Prime Minister's real agenda, they have to listen to what he says behind closed doors.

In public, his comments are an inconsistent mess. First, it was no recession and no deficit. Now we know he has the biggest deficit in the history of this country. However, in private, when the Prime Minister knows the cameras are not rolling, or thinks they are not rolling, he is completely consistent. Recent video has exposed his real agenda.

He needs absolute power so he can teach his enemies a lesson, and he makes it clear just who his enemies are: women, minorities, anyone who dares to fight to protect their charter rights.

Regarding the courts, the Prime Minister had the audacity to characterize one of the most independent and impartial judiciaries in the world as “left-wing ideologues”: Conservative Party in public, Reform Party in private.

Liberals will stop accusing Conservatives of having a hidden agenda when Conservatives stop talking about it behind closed doors.

\* \* \*

#### LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not want an election. They want politicians to put their differences aside and focus on economic recovery. Two recent polls make that point very clear.

A Canadian Press Harris/Decima survey shows 73% of Canadians are against having an election. An EKOS poll shows more than 70% of Canadians are against a fall election, yet the Leader of the Opposition is intent on forcing one.

Our economic action plan is working and forcing an election would interrupt our work on the economy. We cannot risk our progress and our recovery with an unnecessary election now. The international consensus is that no country should get sidetracked on its stimulus plans.

The government wants to fight the recession. The Leader of the Opposition wants to fight the recovery. This just proves that he is not in it for Canadians. He is in it for himself.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

#### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today we pay tribute to Pte. Patrick Lormand, who was killed in Afghanistan yesterday. We pay tribute to his sacrifice.

Last week, behind closed doors, the Prime Minister stated that if there were an election, he would like to teach Canadians a lesson. Those are his own words.

After four years of failure, after a record deficit, a record unemployment rate and a record bankruptcy rate, does he really feel he is in a position to teach Canadians a lesson?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition began by mentioning the death of a Canadian soldier in Afghanistan.

These soldiers are doing a great job for us. They are protecting our values and our world from great dangers. Our prayers and our thoughts are with their families and comrades.

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find it curious that after weeks of berating the idea of a coalition, the Prime Minister seems to be hard at work forming one himself and with people whom he referred to, until this morning, as socialists.

I am just wondering whether the Prime Minister could confirm his new-found love for socialism and does he not think it prudent to change his attack ads?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is flailing around trying to invent reasons why Canadians should have another election in less than a year, four elections in five years.

The fact of the matter is that Canadians do not want an election, Canada does not need an election and an election is not in this country's best interest. We have important economic measures before Parliament. All the parties in Parliament should be focused on those measures and on the economy. The Leader of the Opposition should focus on our country's best interests.

• (1420)

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just a year ago, the Prime Minister promised Canada five years of surplus and then told us that his recession would be a great buying opportunity. He then slapped Canada with a \$32 billion deficit. Whoops, that went to \$50 billion and now it is \$56 billion and he will make Canadians pay for it with higher payroll taxes.

How can Canadians trust a government with this record? The problem of instability, Mr. Prime Minister, is you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Leader of the Opposition knows not to make direct references to other colleagues.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has been affected by the global recession that has affected every country. At the same time, Canada's performance has been admired by many around the world. Canada is in a very strong position. Our deficits, while large, are, nevertheless, some of the smallest in the developed world. They are necessary to help people, but our stimulus spending must end at the end of this recession and we must return to surplus.

I would invite the Leader of the Opposition, since he has yet to table any comprehensive economic agenda at all, which I have

invited since the budget last January, if he has anything to say on the economy to bring it here so we can debate it.

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## HEALTH

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Prime Minister.

In light of the extraordinary attacks on our health care system by the people who apparently have given the Prime Minister such spiritual inspiration over the years, I would ask the Prime Minister if he is proud of our health care system?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Yes, Mr. Speaker. It is the only system my family has ever used and we are depending on it in the future.

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in light of that answer, perhaps the Prime Minister could explain the astonishing silence of the Government of Canada when our system has been under consistent attack for several months by right-wing forces in the United States. In particular—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The Speaker is having a very difficult time hearing the question and I would appreciate some assistance from my colleagues. The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Prime Minister a very simple question. Does the government plan to launch a significant defence of the Canadian system in light of the attack that is being made on it in the United States of America?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we intend to let the United States make its own decisions on domestic debates.

I will say that the Canadian health care system will not only survive attacks by right-wing commentators in the United States but has even survived one by left-wing incompetents in Ontario.

\* \* \*

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

## JUSTICE

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as Vincent Lacroix's trial gets underway today, and as the number of victims of white collar crime continues to grow, concrete action is desperately needed to tackle corporate crime. Today the Bloc Québécois is introducing a bill to remove the provisions that allow white collar criminals to be released after serving only one-sixth of their sentence. With a little political will, our bill could pass in one day.

Will the Prime Minister finally put his words into action and support the Bloc Québécois bill so it can pass by Tuesday?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I should point out that this is a major shift in the Bloc's position. When this government proposed the elimination of house arrest and allowing white collar criminals to serve their sentences at home, the coalition of the Bloc, the Liberals and the NDP opposed it and quashed those proposals in the House of Commons. Now the Bloc has introduced a bill. We will examine the bill carefully. We will consider it and submit our proposals soon.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister never proposed eliminating the possibility of release after serving one-sixth of a sentence. What he just said is completely false. Our bill addresses only release after one-sixth of a sentence. Thus, there is no poison pill here, as there usually is with the Conservative government. Furthermore, there is consensus in Quebec concerning this proposal.

Will the Prime Minister act in good faith on Tuesday and support this Bloc Québécois bill aimed at eliminating the release of criminals after only one-sixth of their sentence?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is no need for parole when the offender is under house arrest. That is why we proposed eliminating the latter. I recently met with Quebec investors who asked not only for tougher sentences for white collar criminals, but also for a national securities commission to prevent such incidents. That is what we are proposing, and the provinces can participate in that system on a voluntary basis.

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**TAXATION**

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is necessary to go after tax havens to ensure that white collar criminals cannot hide there the money stolen from small investors. The Liberals and the Conservatives have shown absolutely no desire to go after tax havens.

In the most recent budget, for example, which the Liberals supported, the Conservatives reneged on their promise to go after the practice of double deduction and continue to refuse to go after the tax schemes involving Barbados.

Will the minister finally establish measures with teeth to deal with the problems of tax havens?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as we know, the issue of tax havens is a concern of our government. We are working on the matter. Recently, we have seen the UBS file resurface. For the information of the hon. member, I point out that, since we have been making progress in this direction, 12 people of 38 who use tax havens abroad have made a voluntary disclosure, which means revenue of \$4.5 million for the government. People know already that we are headed in the right direction. We want to make progress in the matter of tax havens and ensure that people who evade taxes know we will catch up with them.

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, tax havens are responsible as well for the erosion of government revenues. This is a matter for the minister. Instead of dipping into the pockets of the unemployed, as the Liberals so often did, the government should begin by going after those who are not paying their taxes.

Will the Minister of International Trade commit to not signing free trade agreements with the countries accused by the OECD, as is the case at the moment with Panama?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of National Revenue.

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is nevertheless interesting to see that there is considerable discussion on the matter of tax havens. I mentioned 12 cases completed of the 38 which have begun the process of voluntary disclosure. The situation is the same for other offshore jurisdictions. Seven of 23 cases are already underway. As regards eBay, 2 of 36 have made a voluntary disclosure. People see that our government is responsible. We are continuing in that direction.

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● (1430)

**CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when Canadians elect a minority government, it is the Prime Minister's responsibility to work with the other parties. The lines of communication must be open. This Prime Minister insists on governing as though he had a majority.

Does the Prime Minister realize that, because of his attitude, we are on the brink of an election less than a year after the last one?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that people do not want an election. The country does not need an election. An election is not in the country's best interest. The priority for our government and for the people of Canada is the economy. The government has put some significant proposals about the economy before the House. I encourage all parties to examine and debate those proposals.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister goes around insulting people and calling them names. He will not work with other members of Parliament or other parties. Maybe he is used to this carte blanche that he has had with 79 votes in a row from the official opposition without even getting anything in return.

The fact is that Canadians are reeling from the impact of this recession. They are looking for action, they are looking for help and they are looking for it now.

Is the Prime Minister willing to work with other parties or will he continue with his attitude of his way or the highway?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the public's number one concern is the economy. It is certainly not an election.



*Oral Questions*

The population has been very supportive of the economic measures this government has brought forward. This government is bringing forward additional measures today. I hope all parties will examine those measures.

I think the population has a right to expect that all parties in the House will honestly examine those measures and decide whether or not they are good for the economy before deciding whether to vote for or against them.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in a minority situation, parliaments can get good things done. We had medicare adopted, the Canada pension plan adopted, and the Canadian flag adopted. The list is long of what minority parliaments can do. Even the Liberal Party managed to get something done in a minority parliament on things like transit, housing, and post-secondary education when it chose to work with New Democrats.

It is the Prime Minister's choice. Will he lead us down the road to an election, or will he work with other parliamentarians? Will he work with us, or will he provoke an election campaign? Which is it going to be?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely clear that this government will be voting to proceed with Parliament and proceed with the economic agenda. This party will be voting against an election campaign. That is exactly what Canadians expect.

A lot of good things are being done, such as infrastructure projects across the country, help for the vulnerable, and improvements to employment insurance benefits. All parties should get behind these positive things for the Canadian economy and not waste our time with an opportunistic and needless election campaign.

[Translation]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Prime Minister that, on September 7, 2008, he broke his own law about fixed election dates.

The Prime Minister says that judges are “left-wing ideologues”. He also called women fighting for equality “marginal left-wing groups”. Women are not a marginal group.

When will the Prime Minister admit that all he really wants to do is impose his right-wing reform agenda on Canadians?

[English]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have been focused since January on the economy to help Canadians who need it most. We are creating jobs for them through our significant investments in infrastructure. We are preserving jobs through expansion of our work-sharing program, which is now protecting the jobs of over 165,000 people. We are bringing forward even more measures to support those who have been hardest hit by the recession.

We hope that the opposition will support these movements so that we can support Canadians who need it.

●(1435)

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that minister, like her government, is not credible, period.

The Prime Minister finally revealed in his closed-door speech his real feelings about what he calls fringe groups, but the door has been opened for Canadians.

The Minister of Industry recently ordered bureaucrats to scrutinize tourism events directly related to gays, lesbians, women's groups, and so on.

Will the Conservatives now tell Canadians exactly which groups are on their blacklist for special scrutiny?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is not only an incorrect allegation but an odious one for the first day back in this session. For that member to accuse me or our government of homophobia and of misogyny is her party's stock-in-trade, perhaps, but it does not make it the truth.

In fact, we have an orderly transfer of delegated authorities. It was always contemplated on this side of the House as a procedural transfer of authority. Yet the Liberals create these conspiracies and this fallacy that we have an anti-women or anti-gay agenda.

It is not true, and in fact, that member should apologize to those groups right now for marginalizing their true issues.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week's economic update called for a substantial increase in EI premiums for Canadians.

In July, when the Prime Minister was asked if he would increase taxes, he said that was a “very stupid policy”.

Now that his own Minister of Finance has decided on a major increase in taxes, does the Prime Minister still think it is a stupid policy?

[English]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in budget 2008 we put forward a proposal to have an independent, arm's-length employment insurance financing board that would determine premiums independently so that they would be on a break-even basis over a length of time. That was approved by this Parliament, so going forward, that will be the way that rates are set.

What we will not do, however, is set premiums so that we have a great surplus, as the Liberals did, which they spent on their pet political projects.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, these Conservatives say they will not raise taxes, while imposing what the C.D. Howe Institute says is a 43% increase in employment premiums. Canadians understand that EI premiums do not go up by magic. They go up because the Conservative government wants them to go up. A tax hike is a tax hike is a tax hike.

When it comes to simply telling the truth, how can Canadians believe anything the government tells them?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us face it, to stimulate our economy within our economic action plan, we froze EI premiums for two years. That has two advantages: one, it helps employers keep their employees without incurring additional costs; and two, it makes sure that Canadians keep more of their hard-earned money during these tough economic times.

The opposition supported that. We support that going forward. The Employment Insurance Financing Board will set rates at arm's length so that the fund will be balanced on an ongoing basis and not used, as the Liberals did, for pet political projects.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives, like the Liberals, propose the same lame solutions to eliminate the deficit, and once again want to siphon money meant for EI to achieve their goals. While unemployed workers are struggling, the oil companies are pocketing billions of dollars that the government is handing them through tax breaks.

We are in the middle of an economic crisis. How can the government justify giving obscene tax breaks to oil companies that clearly do not need them, and making unjustified attacks on unemployed workers?

• (1440)

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the question that the member should be asking is whether her party will support our government and long-tenured workers, while we are proposing changes today to support long-tenured workers who have lost their jobs. I am thinking, for instance, of workers in the forestry industry. We want to give five to 20 additional weeks of EI benefits to these long-tenured workers who have been contributing to EI for a long time.

Will you support these workers, yes or no? Will you support the government, yes or no?

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we need a comprehensive reform of the employment insurance system.

Once again, the Conservatives who promised to do things differently are copying the Liberals and making the unemployed and the contributors to EI pay for the current deficit.

Instead of once again going after the unemployed by dipping freely into the fund, why does the government not look for ways to help workers by supporting the Bloc's Bill C-308, for instance, which we debated just this morning in the House?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to remind the member that we confirmed this morning that EI rates would remain the same for 2009-10, meaning that the premiums for workers will not increase.

Second, a few months ago, we implemented a measure granting an additional five weeks, to support workers during a time when our country is experiencing economic difficulties in this global recession. We also helped workers by allowing them to do job-sharing, a measure that 165,000 people have taken advantage of.

With respect to transitioning workers, we also helped those who want to take training. We gave \$1.5 billion to the provinces to help them do so. There are all kinds of measures—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Joliette.

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**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, after much delay, the government finally seems to have decided to pass the home renovation tax credit, a measure that the Bloc Québécois had previously proposed. This delay concerns people who have renovated their home and could hurt the program and the economy.

Will the Conservative government dispense with trickery and put forward a ways and means motion this week to implement this tax credit without lumping it in with other measures that it knows the Bloc Québécois or other opposition parties do not agree with? That is the question.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to implement budget measures. Yes, the home renovation tax credit is a very important part of the economic action plan for Canada. It is very well known around the country and many people want to use it, so I hope the House will support this budget measure when it is presented to the House by way of a notice of ways and means.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as for the renovation tax credit, the government can act quickly by supporting the Bloc Québécois bill, which would increase the use of wood in federal buildings. The minister responsible for economic development said that he wanted to look at this bill first. It has now been three months since the bill was introduced, and a coalition to promote the use of wood will be launched tomorrow in Quebec.

Can the minister tell us today whether his government will support the Bloc Québécois bill?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, speaking of real measures that give results, Public Works and Government Services had a budget of \$400 million, including \$323 million for building renovations. That is how to stimulate the economy. Additional work is creating an increased demand for wood. It is the same thing with the home renovation tax credit.

But once again, the Bloc voted against these fine economic measures that produce results. It is shameful.

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[English]

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for the Prime Minister, after analyzing his government's infrastructure promises, we now know why there has been so little real construction. It was his cabinet ministers arguing among themselves that has delayed things for months.

Of the top 10 ridings in Ontario receiving infrastructure funds, four are represented by his cabinet ministers, including the minister responsible, the Minister of Transport, and a fifth by his parliamentary secretary.

How does the Prime Minister explain to the 408,000 Canadian families who became unemployed since last fall that his cabinet is too busy trying to buy votes to create the jobs that are needed?

●(1445)

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we of course are not a government that makes decisions unilaterally. We work on these projects with other premiers, such as Premier Williams perhaps, Premier McGuinty, and former premier Doer, and municipal leaders of all political stripes. Indeed, these projects are going across this land, not only in the ridings he mentioned; but of course, last weekend there were more projects for Cape Breton and Halifax, and new projects for Toronto, with half a billion dollars for more than 500 projects throughout the 416 region.

That is what we are doing for Canada. That is what we are doing for these regions and we are proud of it.

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Prime Minister stayed glued to his seat, because the minister who got up gave himself 28 projects, five times as many projects to fix recreation centres as the average.

Across the country, the Minister of Transport's riding and the ridings of his two colleagues in Ottawa have an unemployment rate that is half that of the rest of the province, yet they are giving themselves two to four times as much money for infrastructure stimulus. They are leaving 400,000 people, a workforce the size of New Brunswick, abandoned across the country.

When his cabinet ministers are stimulating the country, why should anybody trust this government to help—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Industry.

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are all proud of our constituencies, and I am proud of the hard work that I do for the people of Parry Sound—Muskoka, but perhaps

the hon. member would like to know that the highest per capita spending anywhere in the country on infrastructure is in Windsor, Ontario.

Everybody gets to benefit. That is why this government is a government for all the people.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, time and again, this government fails to stand up for Canadians with names like Abdelrazik, Suaad Mohamud, and Abdihakim Mohammed.

Canadian citizenship means that the Prime Minister must stand up for Canadians, whoever they are, wherever they may be. A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, but with his record, how can Canadians trust the Prime Minister to provide them equal protection abroad when they are in trouble?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure everyone in this House that, yes, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, and that this government will stand for all Canadians anywhere, at any given time. Our record is very clear on that issue, and we want to make it very clear to everyone out there that this government will stand behind any Canadian, wherever he or she may be.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government's record belies the contention just made.

I am a proud Canadian, and I have children and grandchildren who are proud Canadians. Given that he has failed in his duty to protect some Canadians abroad, can my children or their grandchildren trust the Prime Minister to stand up for them if they ever need help abroad?

In the eyes of this government, are some Canadians not really Canadians? For the Liberal Party of Canada, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. Why does he not get it?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the hon. member that I also am very proud to be Canadian, so are my children, and so is everyone here, not only him.

Let me also assure him that, when he is talking about Mr. Abdelrazik and about Omar Khadr, it happened when his party was in power.

This government will stand for all law-abiding Canadians, and I want to say, yes, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, and he is a Canadian.

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**CANADIAN FORCES**

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, hon. members may be aware that there was a very objectionable piece of literature circulated last week by an opposition member and a former cabinet minister suggesting that Canadians are no longer proud of our flag and stating that this government has turned its back on proud Canadian traditions of diplomacy, peacekeeping, human rights and international development.

*Oral Questions*

Could the minister inform the House about our government's reaction to this insinuation?

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, indeed that piece of literature was circulated to my riding of Fredericton, home to Canada's largest military base, CFB Gagetown. For a member of this chamber to suggest that Canadians should not be proud of their flag has no place in this country's political system. The tactic of the party opposite to try to erode the pride that Canadians have in their country and the good work that it does abroad is despicable. It is particularly offensive to make such disparaging remarks to members of the Canadian Forces and their families, the men and women who risk their lives every day for our country, who proudly wear the Canadian flag on their shoulders.

Our government is proud of our country, our men and women in uniform and the good work they do.

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• (1450)

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after dithering for months before coming to the assistance of the unemployed, the government has finally decided to take a step in the right direction. However, thousands of workers have been left without a safety net in this unprecedented crisis.

The failure of the closed door negotiations with the Liberals was foreseeable. It was the Liberals who caused most of the employment insurance problems.

We need to make further changes to the system. When will we see comprehensive proposals to solve the unemployment insurance problems created by the Liberals?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is right to point out what is happening on the Liberal side because, as you know, we were supposed to have a bipartisan committee. They were supposed to work in good faith with us. They abandoned the committee. They abandoned the unemployed.

Today we are showing that we take this matter seriously and that we intend to help long-tenured workers. We will give them an additional 5 to 20 weeks. I would also like to tell the member that we will soon have more to say about our desire to help self-employed workers.

[English]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we know that it is not the end of the recession for the unemployed. According to the TD Bank, job losses for workers aged 25 to 54 have in fact deteriorated faster over the past 10 months than they did during the 1980s and 1990s recessions. Too many have been left behind already.

When is the government going to complete the job and introduce the legislation to help the self-employed just referred to, to protect pensioners, something we all agree upon, and to protect consumers from gouging by banks and credit card companies?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are very sensitive to the needs of the unemployed. That is why in our economic action plan we brought in an additional five weeks of regular benefits. We increased the maximum time people could collect by an extra five weeks. We expanded work sharing and we are helping people get back to work through unprecedented investments in training. I should point out that the NDP voted against every single one of those initiatives to help our unemployed.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SECURITIES INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the National Assembly of Quebec voted unanimously in favour of demanding that the federal government respect Quebec's jurisdiction with regard to securities.

The parties also all unanimously voted to ask for the transfer of ownership of the federal land in front of the National Assembly, as well as financial compensation in connection with the harmonization of the Quebec sales tax and the GST.

Does the Conservative government plan to respond favourably to the National Assembly's unanimous votes, or does it plan to do as the Liberals did and ignore Quebec's legitimate requests?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we finally have a government that practises open federalism. As we have said, negotiations on tax harmonization will not be held in the public arena. They will be held in good faith. That is also what the Government of Quebec has said. In addition, on June 24, the Prime Minister reiterated the fact that he was ready to begin discussions regarding the land in front of the National Assembly.

Lastly, regarding the securities commission, I repeat once again for those who have not already heard, it would be a voluntary system; yes, I mean voluntary. Accordingly, there is no interference in jurisdictions—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this government's recognition of the Quebec nation was meaningless. Conservatives and Liberals alike feel that, sure, Quebec can have a presence on the international scene, as long as it keeps its mouth shut. Quebec is welcome to attend the Copenhagen climate change conference, but Ottawa has warned Quebec that Canada will speak with a single voice, just like at UNESCO.

How is anyone supposed to believe that the government recognizes the Quebec nation when it refuses to allow the nation to speak up at international venues about issues that affect it directly?

*Oral Questions*

●(1455)

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. I met with Premier Charest. Our government promotes federal-provincial collaboration, but Canada will speak with one voice. We will fight climate change without compromising our economic recovery. We will target all greenhouse gas emitters. When it comes to dealing with this issue, we will not just sit on the sidelines like the Bloc.

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the subject of employment insurance, the Conservatives seem to be on the brink of a death bed conversion. Under the previous Liberal government, the employment insurance premium rate was reduced 12 times consecutively. Just last July, the Prime Minister was calling the idea of increasing EI rates stupid.

So, what does he call the Minister of Finance's decision to raise premiums?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to point out we indicated clearly this morning that premiums would not be increased in 2009, or 2010. They will remain unchanged for all workers.

The question that is worth asking, though, is this. Why did the Liberals abandon the unemployed when, at the end of June, they were prepared to sit on a committee to suggest measures to help them? They abandoned them, not us. Today we are in fact proposing help to long-tenured workers so that they may extend their employment insurance by 5 to 20 weeks.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this government heard none of our proposals. Employment insurance is a total mess. The Minister of Finance tells us that EI premiums will increase. The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, however, would have us believe that the changes she says she wants to make will not raise premiums.

Is it because the Minister of Finance had already undertaken to raise them that she could appear today to be so generous?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, allow me once again to point out all the measures we have put in place in recent months to help workers.

First, we extended the EI period by five weeks. Then we helped companies and employees by extending the job-sharing period from 38 to 52 weeks. Today we are announcing other measures to help long-tenured workers, those who work in mining, the manufacturing, automobile and forestry sectors, among others, those who have paid premiums for years. We want to help them by giving them an additional 5 to 20 weeks.

Will the opposition support us in this measure?

[English]

**TAXATION**

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is said there are two certainties in life: death and taxes. The finance minister wants to hit both with his HST scheme, and the B.C. Liberals have foolishly signed on. Now British Columbians will have to pay 7% more for essentials such as food, haircuts, vitamins, and even funerals.

Why is the Conservative government hellbent on raising taxes at a time when many British Columbians are struggling to pay their bills every day? Why are the Conservatives foisting this tax on the people of British Columbia?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the decision by any particular province of whether or not to harmonize is a decision for that provincial government to make. It is not a decision made by the federal government.

The proposal with respect to harmonization has been in the budgets repeatedly. Years ago, under the Liberal government, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and other provinces chose to harmonize. Some additional provinces are now making that decision. It is a decision for them to make.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the finance minister wants people to believe that he had nothing to do with raising their taxes and yet he offered the McQuinty Liberals in Ontario \$4.3 billion if they harmonized their sales tax. That bribe worked and Ontario families will now be paying 8% more on vitamins, transit tickets, power bills and, yes, even funerals.

Increasing the tax burden on hard-working families is simply the wrong approach. Will the finance minister stop playing Ontarians for fools and end this Liberal-Conservative tax grab?

●(1500)

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** As I said, Mr. Speaker, the same proposal is there for all of the provinces that have not yet harmonized and that is their decision.

I say to the member opposite it is passing strange that she is arguing about tax reductions. Her party is the party that voted against reducing the GST, which we have reduced twice since we took office.

This is a party that reduces taxes. That is the party that raises taxes.

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the leader of the Liberal Party continues to put his personal aspirations ahead of Canadians with talk of an unwanted election, our Conservative government is working to deliver results for Canadians hit hardest by the global recession. Many of these workers are in my riding of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

*Routine Proceedings*

Could the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development tell us what our government is doing for those workers?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is proposing additional support to workers who have paid EI premiums for years while they look for jobs in our recovering economy.

We intend to table legislation that will provide up to 20 weeks of additional EI regular benefits to unemployed long-tenured workers because it is the fair and right thing to do. By contrast, the Liberals would continue to push the irresponsible and very expensive 45-day work year. That is not for us.

\* \* \*

**SEARCH AND RESCUE**

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador today are reeling from another tragedy at sea. As rescue efforts continue for one missing crew member, questions are again being asked about the adequate availability of search and rescue service.

I ask the minister responsible for search and rescue, given this most recent tragedy off our coast, will the minister now do a total review of search and rescue service in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, like the member opposite and, I am sure, all members of the House, our thoughts and prayers are with the families of those affected by the loss, the ongoing search and those affected by the sinking of the *Sea Gypsy*.

We monitor regularly conditions with respect to search and rescue. This particular issue around the placement of search and rescue assets has been one that has required a great deal of attention.

I assure the member opposite that one Hercules aircraft is on standby in Sydney now. We continue to work with the Coast Guard with respect to this particular situation. I assure the member opposite that we will—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**HEALTH**

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals and the Conservatives are responsible for the current crisis with the supply of medical isotopes. The federal government, which is responsible for this crisis, has an obligation to compensate the provinces, which, for the past several months, have had to contend with the disastrous consequences of the incompetence of successive federal governments.

Will the government confirm that it is prepared to welcome any request for financial compensation from the Government of Quebec?  
[*English*]

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are working very closely with the provinces and territories on this

issue. In fact, I will be meeting with the provincial health ministers this week in Winnipeg to discuss this very issue.

\* \* \*

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** 'Mr. Speaker, nine million sockeye salmon vanished during this summer's migration to the Fraser River. A drop of the same magnitude is the collapse of the Atlantic cod, nothing less than a catastrophe, yet the minister has evaded responsibility in taking no effective action.

Courts have clearly ruled that the management of west coast fisheries is a federal responsibility. The government must make it a top priority.

Will the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans convene immediately an emergency summit on salmon in B.C. with all stakeholder groups, including local governments, fishers, first nations, environmental organizations, and put in place an action plan now?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about the low return of sockeye salmon in British Columbia. Conservation, I can tell the member, is our number one priority.

I want to inform the hon. member that I was in British Columbia just last weekend and had a meeting with a number of industry stakeholders and we will plan the best way forward from there. I had a round table with them and they presented plenty of ideas for discussion. We will be planning a way forward from discussions with the industry.

\* \* \*

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Deputy Speaker:** I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. George Prime, Senator and Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs for Grenada.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

•(1505)

[*English*]

**WAYS AND MEANS**

NOTICE OF MOTION

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1) I wish to table a notice of ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and to implement other measures.

I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

## GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(b) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 129 petitions.

\* \* \*

## COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

### INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 109, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to the second report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology entitled, "A Study of the Crisis in the Automotive Sector in Canada", tabled in the House of Commons on March 31, 2009.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-434, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (day parole—six months or one sixth of the sentence rule).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill is extremely short. It has only two clauses of less than three lines each because the objective is to obtain the unanimous consent of this House.

I am convinced that all members of this House are against the provisions of the law that allows offenders to be released after serving one sixth of their sentence. We may disagree on other measures. The different parties have a number of suggestions for dealing with white-collar crime. However, if there is one thing everyone agrees on it is this bill. In fact, we could get off to a start by unanimously adopting these provisions tomorrow.

Therefore, I intend to introduce a motion tomorrow to have this bill pass all stages as of tomorrow.

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

\* \* \*

• (1510)

## PETITIONS

### CANADA POST

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling two petitions calling for the resumption of full Canada Post services in the south end of Sainte-Julie. Eight hundred and forty-seven citizens living in this neighbourhood signed the petition, and 813 signatures have been duly certified.

According to the petitioners, the closing of the Domaine des Hauts-Bois outlet in Sainte-Julie deprives approximately 10,000 people of postal service in the vicinity of their homes and requires them to use a busy road to cross highway 20 in order to take advantage of this public service.

## Routine Proceedings

Many people have rightly demonstrated that action is urgently needed in this sector because of a new seniors residence with several hundred units.

[English]

## POVERTY

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by people from all across Canada who are concerned about the growing poverty in our country.

Whereas there are millions of people in Canada who are poor, including both individuals who work and have no work, and the inequality and social exclusion they face prevent them from leading full and productive lives for the good of themselves, their communities and our country, they are asking the Government of Canada and the House of Commons to join the provinces, territories and municipalities in showing leadership by creating and successfully implementing a national poverty plan for our country.

## RIGHTS OF EMPLOYEES

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by over 12,000 former employees of Nortel.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to amend the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to protect the rights of all Canadian employees and to ensure that employees laid off by a company receiving pension or long term disability benefits during bankruptcy proceedings obtain preferred creditor status over other secured creditors.

They also call upon Parliament to amend the Investment Canada Act to ensure that employee-related claims are paid from proceeds of Canadian asset sales before funds are permitted to leave the country.

## INCOME TRUSTS

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present yet another petition on the broken income trusts promise.

The Prime Minister said that there was no greater fraud than a promise not kept. Two elections ago, he emphatically promised that he would never put a tax on income trusts. The Conservative government recklessly broke that promise and imposed a 31.5% draconian tax on income trusts. Independent experts subsequently provided Parliament with clear evidence that the finance minister's decision on income trusts was based on flawed methodology and incorrect assumptions.

I think we have presented well over 10,000 petitions in the House asking the Government of Canada to acknowledge that the financial justification for imposing the tax was flawed, to apologize to Canadians who were unfairly harmed by the reckless broken promise and, finally, to repeal the punitive 31.5% tax on income trusts.

*Routine Proceedings*

## RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to present a petition in which the petitioners note that Canada is a country that respects human rights. It is included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that everyone has the right to life. They note that it has been 40 years, since May 14, 1969, when Parliament changed the law to permit abortion. Since January 28, 1988, Canada has had no law to protect the lives of unborn children.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to pass legislation for the protection of human life from the time of conception until natural death.

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of petitions to table. The first is from a number of constituents from the Fraser Valley who call upon Parliament to pass legislation for the protection of human life from the time of conception until natural death.

• (1515)

## IDENTITY THEFT

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the other petition is to combat identity theft in Canada which is a very serious problem.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 226 to 228, 242, 247, 253, 255, 258, 260, 266, 272, 296, 302, 305, 308, 310, 312 to 315, 324, 329, 337, 342 to 344, 346, 348, 350, 353, 360, 364 to 366, 370, 371, 373, 378, 382 to 385, 387 and 395.

[Text]

Question No. 226—**Mrs. Michelle Simson:**

With regard to the human swine flu: (a) when exactly was the government first approached by Mexico for help in managing this serious health issue; (b) how many fatalities did the Mexican authorities attribute to this respiratory disease at the time they first notified Canada of their situation; (c) how many victims, that were not fatalities, were they treating when they first approached Canada on the swine flu; (d) what were the official concerns cited by the Mexican authorities in seeking Canadian and international assistance in managing this emergency; and (e) when did the Canadian government undertake the requested assistance?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), the Government of Canada was first approached by Mexico for laboratory testing assistance on April 17, 2009.

In response to (b), Mexican authorities did not disclose the number of fatalities attributed to the respiratory disease at the time they first notified Canada of their situation. Events were very unclear at that time.

In response to (c), when Mexican authorities first approached Canada on the H1N1 flu virus, they advised Canada that a number of outbreaks were occurring in different regions in Mexico, with approximately 600 suspect cases of influenza-like illness.

In response to (d), Mexican authorities contacted Canada as they were experiencing what appeared to be a late influenza season with higher than normal rates in health care workers, as well as some severe illness which they assessed as unusual. Laboratory testing in Mexico had failed to yield the diagnosis.

In response to (e), the Government of Canada responded April 17, 2009 offering laboratory and technical assistance to Mexico

Question No. 227—**Hon. Larry Bagnell:**

With regards to motion M-426 (rare diseases and disorders), in the name of Mr. Bell (Vancouver North), adopted by the House on May 6, 2008, since that time: (a) has the government acted on this policy and, if not, why not; (b) how much contact has the government initiated and had with stakeholder groups such as Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders to enact this policy; (c) what financial resources has been set aside for this policy; (d) what assurances can the government give Canadians with rare disorders that they have a right to and can access effective therapies and medications; and (e) what actions will the government take to make Canadians aware of this program?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** In response to (a), the motion called for exploratory work related to research, regulation and reimbursement of drugs for rare diseases, in collaboration with provinces and territories and stakeholders. The Motion did not establish a program or policy. Initial analysis on motion no 426 was undertaken after it was adopted in May 2008 and before Parliament was dissolved. The Government continues to consider the issue of drugs for rare diseases and the need, if any, for action in areas of federal responsibility. Further work in this area will require the active engagement of provinces and territories, who, as noted above, have primary responsibility for drug coverage.

In response to (b), No stakeholder consultations on the motion were held before the dissolution of Parliament. However, Health Canada officials have discussed related issues with stakeholders, notably the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders CORD, on numerous occasions. CORD has been an active participant in formal consultations with respect to legislative and regulatory modernization since 2006. The organization has identified data challenges in the review and authorization of products for small populations as a key concern. They have been very supportive of efforts to modernize the Food and Drugs Act and Regulations.

In response to (c), Past analytical work related to the motion and the broader issue of drugs for rare diseases has been conducted within existing resources.



*Routine Proceedings*

In response to (d), The federal government recognizes the challenges faced by Canadians with rare disorders, and will continue to examine issues related to treatments for rare disorders within the scope of federal role and responsibilities. For example, Health Canada is looking at the regulatory challenges posed by drugs for rare diseases, as part of the department's ongoing work on regulatory modernization. CORDC and other stakeholders have been consulted in this work. It is important to note that prescription drugs provided outside of hospital are outside of the scope of the Canada Health Act and hence, provincial and territorial governments determine, at their own discretion, whether, and under what terms and conditions, to publicly finance prescription drugs, including drugs for rare diseases. The only exceptions are federal populations, e.g., first nations and Inuit, military, veterans, for which the federal government directly provides services. However, the federal government continues to pursue constructive and collaborative work with provinces and territories, including finding ways to better assess drugs for rare diseases for potential reimbursement by our respective drug programs.

In response to (e) To clarify, no program was established through this motion, which called for exploratory work only.

Question No. 228—**Hon. Larry Bagnell:**

Since coming to power, (i) what has the government done to promote and help get started the Alaska Highway gas pipeline, (ii) what meetings have been held with stakeholder groups, (iii) what has been the total government expenditures to date on this project, (iv) what is the target date for the construction of this gas pipeline?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (i), there are two separate proposals to build an Alaska Highway pipeline, AHP. Both project proponents are benefiting from single window access into a streamlined regulatory approvals process, either through a re-staffed Northern Pipeline Agency, NPA, or else through the Major Projects Management Office which was created to improve regulatory performance through a more accountable, predictable, transparent and timely regulatory review process for major resource projects. On March 5, 2008, the then Minister of Natural Resources Canada, NRCan, wrote to the Governor of Alaska expressing support for an AHP. NRCan has publicly expressed the government's support for an AHP at large conferences including the Alaska Resource Development conference in Anchorage, Alaska, in November 2008, the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission Conference in May 2008, and the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association's Annual Dinners in 2008 and 2009. Recognizing the importance of first nation engagement and consultation, the Government of Canada is engaging first nations along the proposed pipeline route. The government has both funded and participated in aboriginal workshops organized by the Alaska Highway Aboriginal Pipeline Coalition, AHAPC. Currently, federal departments including NRCan, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, the NPA and the National Energy Board, NEB, are conducting a series of Yukon and first nation community visits along the Yukon portion of the Alaska Highway to raise awareness and answer questions related to the proposed pipeline.

In response to (ii), since January 2006, NRCan has had several meetings with the proponents for an AHP. Meetings have taken place at all levels from working level through to ministerial. First nations are important stakeholders and the government has been actively meeting with them. To date there have been three aboriginal

workshops hosted by the AHAPC, which is a service organization to Yukon first nations along the proposed route. Similar, though smaller meetings, have also taken place in British Columbia. In addition to formal workshops, NRCan has met separately with the chair of the AHAPC. Until recently, NRCan chaired an AHP Director General Steering Committee which met semi-annually to share information with key federal departments. The committee's most active subgroup was the Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Working Group, EARWG. The EARWG met regularly with provincial government representatives as well.

In response to (iii), many AHP related expenditures have been routine business including preparing briefing material and monitoring project developments. However, NRCan did provide approximately \$18,000 toward funding an Aboriginal Pipeline Coalition workshop in 2007. Approximately \$3,000 was spent to attend each of the three workshops. Attending the round of community visits currently under way will add additional expenses. NRCan also sent several attendees and speakers for large conferences including the Alaska Resource Development Conference and the Interstate Oil and Gas Commission conference. Such conferences cost approximately \$3,000 to \$5,000 per person attending, including travel. Finally, NRCan houses the NPA, which has responsibility for the Foothills Alaska pipeline project. However, all NPA's expenditures are cost recovered from the owner of Foothills, TransCanada Pipelines.

In response to (iv), both the TransCanada and the Denali projects have estimated first gas to start flowing in 2018—best case scenarios.

Question No. 242—**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:**

With regard to Employment Insurance: (a) has the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development been provided any documents or departmental briefing notes that outline changes to the processing time of Employment Insurance cheques; (b) under the rules, how many days does an unemployed worker have to wait for his or her first cheque; (c) on average, how many days does an unemployed worker currently wait for his or her cheque; and (d) how many service telephone lines are available to workers looking for information, and how many of those telephone lines are staffed at one time?

*Routine Proceedings*

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), the minister has received various products that have discussed and outlined measures to maintain the standard for processing Employment Insurance, EI, claims given the significant increase in EI applications over the last eight months. A number of them have dealt with the additional resources and measures that are being added to EI processing such as: redistributing workloads across the country; increasing processing staff by over 900 and adding another 400 over the next few months; increasing overtime on a voluntary basis; reassigning staff from other areas of the department that are not involved in processing benefits; recalling recent retirees; increasing the level of automation of claims processing; and extending the regular hours of operation for EI call centres from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday and Fridays and on Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

In response to (b), the standard of service is to have 80% of clients who file for benefits receive their first payment or a non-payment notification within 28 days of the date their claim was filed.

In response to (c), for the first seven months of 2009, the average number of days from the date of application until payment or notification of non-payment was 23 days.

In response to (d), the service has 1,041 telephone lines with up to 821 staff available at any one time. Call centre telephone line capacity always exceeds the number of telephone lines staffed to enable incoming calls, queuing of callers until agents become available, and internal call transfer capabilities.

Question No. 247—**Mr. Anthony Rota:**

With regards to the measures announced in Budget 2009 concerning assistance for consumers of financial products by enhancing disclosure and improving business practices in respect of credit cards issued by federally regulated financial institutions: (a) which government departments, agencies, government officials and their titles were involved in the consultation process and drafting process in regards to this measure and when did they begin; (b) were there any consultations with any of the Credit Card companies who operate in Canada and, if so, when did these meetings occur and who was present; and (c) which other organisations or stakeholders were involved in the consultation process and with which government officials and when did they occur?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in advance of the budget presented to the House of Commons on January 27, 2009, the earliest in modern history, the government launched unprecedented consultation across Canada. These steps were taken to ensure as many Canadians as possible from members of Parliament, business leaders, economists, industry associations non-profit organizations, public interest groups, community groups, provincial, territorial and municipal governments, and most important, everyday citizens were consulted, such as:

an online consultation open to all Canadians was launched at [www.fin.gc.ca](http://www.fin.gc.ca);

a series of roundtable discussions was held with business leaders, economists, academics, industry leaders, community and labour organizations in cities across Canada from Saint John to Victoria;

the Minister of Finance held town hall meetings in locations across Canada to hear from Canadians personally;

meetings with finance ministers and first ministers from all provinces and territories;

the establishment of a non-partisan Economic Advisory Council of prominent Canadians from across the political spectrum for advice on the budget and on the economy in the months ahead;

meetings with leading representatives of other political parties, including the official opposition Liberal Party of Canada, to ask for their ideas; and

the Minister of Finance wrote every member of Parliament asking them to consult with the people in their communities and report what they heard back to him.

As members are likely aware, the Minister of Finance released the aforementioned proposed Credit Business Practices Regulations this past May for comment. The relevant news release and backgrounders are available online at <http://www.fin.gc.ca/n08/09-048-eng.asp>. To summarize, the proposed regulations would:

mandate an effective minimum 21 day, interest-free grace period on all new credit card purchases when a customer pays the outstanding balance in full;

lower interest costs by mandating allocations of payments in favour of the consumer;

allow consumers to keep better track of their personal finances by requiring express consent for credit limit increases;

limit debt collection practices that financial institutions use in contacting a consumer to collect on a debt;

prohibit over-the-limit fees solely arising from holds placed by merchants;

provide clear information in credit contracts and application forms through a summary box that will set out key features, such as interest rates and fees;

assist consumers to manage their credit card obligations by providing information on the time it would take to fully repay the balance, if only the minimum payment is made every month; and

mandate advance disclosure of interest rate increases prior to their taking effect, even if this information had been included in the credit contract.

With respect to the reaction to the proposed regulations, following is a small sampling of analysis by public interest groups or commentators:

Bruce Cran, president of Consumers' Association of Canada, said "All of the things that [the finance minister has] done in there are actually just what we asked for ...overall, I've got to congratulate [the finance minister]".

*Routine Proceedings*

Mel Fruitman, vice president of Consumers' Association of Canada, said, "[They] will solve some of the most egregious practices of the credit card companies ... it's a big step in the right direction towards helping us control the amounts we pay on our credit cards. We think it will greatly improve the situation". A Toronto Star editorial stated, "[the] finance minister ... has introduced some welcome regulatory changes that will both introduce more transparency to the [credit card] system and save consumers some money". A Burnaby Now editorial stated. "[the finance minister's] new regulations ... aim to give consumers more rights when it comes to the credit card industry. One of those regulations ... involves forbidding card issuers from increasing credit limits without the written consent of cardholders. We hope this and the other proposed regulations - which include a 21-day interest-free grace period on all new transactions when consumers pay their balance in full by the due date - gain approval in Ottawa".

Additionally, please note, the aforementioned regulations were published in the Canada *Gazette* on May 23, 2009 and interested persons were invited to make representations to the Financial Institutions Division of the Department of Finance concerning the proposed regulations within 21 days. The deadline for submissions was June 13, 2009.

Regarding the development of the important budget 2009 measures to help consumers of financial products and the subsequent detailed proposed credit business practices regulations, officials from the Department of Finance, the Department of Justice, and the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada were involved in the development and drafting of these measures.

**Question No. 253—Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board (CEIFB) announced in Budget 2008, and the subsequent Nominating Committee announced July 21, 2008: (a) have the Nominating Committee identified candidates for appointment to the CEIFB and, if so, (i) has a list of potential members been presented to the Governor in Council for appointment, (ii) has the Governor in Council appointed members for the CEIFB, (iii) who were the individuals listed or appointed, (iv) what is the home province or territory for each individual; (b) what has the CEIFB done since being founded to fulfill their responsibilities, including (i) implementing Employment Insurance (EI) premium rate-setting mechanism to ensure EI revenues and expenditures break even over time, (ii) using any excess EI revenues in a given year to reduce premium rates in subsequent years, (iii) maintaining a \$2 billion cash reserve fund to support rate stability measures; and (c) has a contingency fund been established, if so, (i) has the transfer of \$2 billion from the Consolidated Revenue Fund into a contingency fund occurred, (ii) what is the current balance in the established contingency fund?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a) (i), yes, the nominating committee has submitted a list of candidates for the board of directors to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, HRSD.

In response to (a) (ii), yes, five members of the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board, CEIFB, were announced by the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development on June 26, 2009. A sixth member was announced by the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development on August 5, 2009. The remaining member is expected to be announced in the coming weeks.

In response to (a) (iii and iv), the six directors who were named to the board of directors include Ms. Elaine Noel-Bentley, Alberta; Mr.

David Brown, Ontario; Mr. Jacques LeBlanc, Quebec; Ms. Janet Pau, British Columbia; Mr. Pankaj Puri, Ontario; and Mr. Tim O'Neill, Prince Edward Island.

The board of directors will be chaired by Mr. David Brown, whose qualifications include 29 years as a senior corporate law partner with the firm Davies Ward Phillips & Vineberg. He was also the chairman and chief executive officer of the Ontario Securities Commission, OSC, for seven years, where he led the expansion and reorganization of the OSC to meet the increasing demands of a changing market.

In response to (b) and (c), the CEIFB is not yet fully operational, and as such the CEIFB reserve has not yet been established.

In order to maintain a competitive advantage and to support employers and employees, the government has frozen EI premium rates for 2010 at \$1.73 per \$100 of insurable earnings, the same level as 2008 and 2009, providing an economic stimulus of \$10.5 billion, as confirmed in Canada's Economic Action Plan: A Second Report to Canadians, June 2009.

With the appointment of the board of directors, the CEIFB is taking the necessary steps toward setting EI premium rates on a break-even basis, beginning in 2011. The creation of a separate account will ensure that excess premiums will be held and invested until used for EI purposes only. The creation of the CEIFB ensures that EI funds are managed independently and used to pay for EI benefits, premium rates reflect actual program costs, and the program is on firm financial footing going forward.

**Question No. 255—Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:**

With respect to the Police Officers Recruitment Fund: (a) how does the government track how many new police officer positions are created and filled from the fund; and (b) how many positions has the fund created and how many of those positions have been filled?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), establishing the first-ever Police Officers Recruitment Fund is a considerable investment that marks an important step forward in a way that respects provincial and territorial jurisdiction for policing while ensuring maximum flexibility. The government concluded its active role in the Police Officers Recruitment Fund on June 22, 2008, with the establishment of trust accounts for each jurisdiction. Consistent with their responsibility for policing, it is up to the provinces and territories to allocate funding as they see fit to their municipal and provincial police services. Provinces and territories are able to use the trust fund in a way that is best suited to address their local public safety priorities and policing needs. Provincial and territorial governments have been encouraged to report directly to their residents on the expenditures and the outcomes achieved. It is through public media releases made by provinces and territories that the Government of Canada is kept apprised of how jurisdictions choose to allocate their funding.

*Routine Proceedings*

In response to (b), to date, seven of the provinces—Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Alberta, Prince Edward Island, British Columbia and New Brunswick—have, through public media releases, announced their intentions with the funding. Publicly announced hiring includes 30 new positions in Saskatchewan, 45 officers in Nova Scotia this year as part of a plan to hire 250 officers by 2011, 329 officers in Ontario, 83 officers in Alberta and 168 officers in British Columbia. Prince Edward Island is using its share to staff and launch its Criminal Intelligence Service Bureau, and New Brunswick is investing its portion to improve regional integrated intelligence units to fight organized crime, establish a police cadet graduate bursary to attract recruits, as well as establish a safer communities and neighbourhoods enforcement unit. Further details on provincial or territorial expenditures should be directed to the responsible provincial or territorial minister.

**Question No. 258—Hon. Maria Minna:**

With regard to the wage earner protection program WEPP, (a) how much money was spent on this program in 2008-2009; (b) how many individuals received payments of any kind eligible under the program; (c) were payments in (b) more or less than budgeted; (d) what was the average payment per individual; (e) how many claims were made last fiscal year; (f) how many claims are expected this year; (g) has the government planned for an increase in bankruptcies and insolvencies this year; (h) what are the administrative costs of this program; (i) how many staff are employed to administer this program; and (j) does the department plan to hire additional staff in the face of the current economic crisis to administer the WEPP?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all data in the responses below were compiled from the Common System for Grants and Contributions. The custom data tabulation was provided to the labour program by Service Canada.

The wage earner protection program, WEPP, was created on July 7, 2008.

In response to (a), \$6.82 million in payments were issued to eligible WEPP recipients between July 7, 2008 and May 31, 2009.

In response to (b), the total number of WEPP reimbursement recipients between July 7, 2008 and May 31, 2009 was 4,802.

In response to (c), total payments made between July 7, 2008 and May 31, 2009 have been less than budgeted for but demand for the program has been steadily increasing in recent months.

In response to (d), the average WEPP payment made per recipient between July 7, 2008 and May 31, 2009 was \$1,420.

In response to (e), between July 7, 2008 and May 31, 2009, the number of Canadians who filed claims for WEPP support was 5,751.

In response to (f), given that this is a new program, and one that was recently expanded as part of Canada's economic action plan, it is difficult to estimate precisely the number of claims expected in the first full year of operation.

In response to (g), budget 2009 added greater protection for workers by extending the WEPP to cover severance and termination pay. The enhanced protection and increased demand for the program due to the uncertain economic climate is estimated to cost \$25 million per year. The expanded program provides financial assistance to Canadian workers. The WEPP was originally budgeted for \$31.2 million. With the additional \$25 million from budget 2009 the total budget for the WEPP is now \$56.2 million.

In response to (h), annual ongoing administrative costs for the WEPP are \$3.5M.

In response to (i), at present there are approximately 30 staff members administering the WEPP. Of these, 9 work for the labour program and 21 work for Service Canada.

In response to (j), the labour program added two staff members and Service Canada added six staff members to support the WEPP expansion as part of budget 2009. WEPP demand is closely monitored and staffing is adjusted accordingly.

**Question No. 260—Hon. Maria Minna:**

With regard to replacement workers: (a) has the government reviewed subsection 94 (2.1) of the Canada Labour Code which prohibits the use of replacement workers if these workers are used to undermine a trade union's capacity to engage in bargaining and represent its member; (b) has the use of replacement workers ever been prohibited under subsection 94 (2.1); (c) has the government compared federal legislation to provincial legislation as it relates to replacement workers and, if so, what were the findings and conclusions; (d) has the department held consultations or provided information to the Minister of Labour to define what services would be deemed essential under federal jurisdiction in the event of a labour dispute should a ban on replacement workers be implemented; (e) does the government intend to take any action on replacement workers in 2009-2010; and (f) has the department provided the Minister of Labour with any documentation indicating that the number of work stoppages would increase and last longer if a replacement worker ban were implemented?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), the effectiveness of section 94(2.1) of the Canada Labour Code regarding replacement workers has been continually reviewed by the government.

In addition, the replacement worker issue was recently considered in Peter Annis' 2008 independent report to the Minister of Labour, entitled "Work Stoppages in the Federal Private Sector: Innovative Solutions". Mr. Annis found that there is no conclusive evidence that banning replacement workers or modifying section 94(2.1) would lead to a decrease in the incidence or duration of work stoppages.

Finally, the government tracks the number of complaints filed with the Canada Industrial Relations Board, CIRB, alleging a violation of section 94(2.1). Since the provision was enacted in 1999, only 23 complaints have been filed alleging unfair use of replacement workers. Of these, 18 were eventually withdrawn by the union, four were dismissed and one is pending. These statistics suggest that the use of replacement workers to undermine a union's bargaining ability is not a pressing problem in the federal jurisdiction.

In response to (b), to date, the use of replacement workers has not been prohibited under section 94(2.1). It only prohibits the use of replacement workers where their presence in the workplace is intended to undermine a union's representational capacity.

*Routine Proceedings*

In response to (c), only two provinces have labour legislation which restricts the right of employers to use the services of replacement workers during work stoppages. Such restrictions have been in force in Quebec since 1977 and in British Columbia since 1993. While Ontario enacted similar provisions in 1993, they were repealed in 1995.

Despite this kind of legislation, a number of complaints concerning the use of replacement workers during work stoppages are filed each year in both Quebec and British Columbia. In 2007-08, 25 complaints were filed in each province respectively. Of the 25 complaints filed in Quebec, 10 were upheld by the provincial labour board. In British Columbia, 5 of the 25 complaints were upheld.

Peter Annis' 2008 independent report to the Minister of Labour, "Work Stoppages in the Federal Private Sector: Innovative Solutions", found that there is no conclusive evidence that banning replacement workers would lead to a decrease in the incidence and duration of work stoppages.

In response to (d), the code does not deal with "essential services"; rather, it includes a requirement, under section 87.4, that, in the event of a work stoppage, goods and services continue to be supplied to the extent necessary to prevent an immediate and serious threat to public safety or health. Currently, if the parties cannot reach an agreement on maintenance of activities, the Canada Industrial Relations Board, CIRB, will decide what services must be maintained.

There have been no consultations on what services would need to be maintained in the event of a labour dispute specifically in the context of a replacement worker ban.

In response to (e), the government does not intend to make any changes to the labour relations provisions of the Canada Labour Code without broad agreement among stakeholders.

In response to (f), no. Data suggests that there is no significant difference in the number or duration of work stoppages whether or not there is a replacement worker ban in place. For the period 2006 to 2008, data indicates that the average duration of a work stoppage in Quebec was 52 days and in British Columbia 55.4 days, while in the federal jurisdiction, the average duration of a work stoppage was 49.2 days.

**Question No. 266—Ms. Chris Charlton:**

With respect to the Government's agreement with the Government of Ontario to harmonize the Goods and Services Tax and Ontario Provincial Sales Tax: (a) what additional classes of goods and services will the new harmonized sales tax apply to that the GST does not; (b) what additional classes of goods and services will the new harmonized sales tax apply to that the Ontario provincial sales tax does not; (c) owing to this agreement, on an annual basis, how much sales tax revenue does the government project it will lose from (i) corporations, and (ii) consumers; and (d) owing to this agreement, on an annual basis, how much new sales tax revenue does the government project it will collect from (i) corporations, and (ii) consumers?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a) and (b), in the 2009 Ontario budget, "Confronting the Challenge: Building Our Economic Future", which is available online at [http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/english/budget/ontariobudgets/2009/papers\\_all.pdf](http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/english/budget/ontariobudgets/2009/papers_all.pdf), the Government of Ontario announced its decision that, starting July 1, 2010, Ontario's retail sales tax, RST, would be converted to a value-added tax structure and combined

with the federal goods and services tax, GST, to create a federally administered single sales tax, subject to the approval of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

The Memorandum of Agreement, MOA, Concerning a Canada-Ontario Comprehensive Integrated Tax Co-ordination Agreement, signed by the governments of Canada and Ontario specifies that Ontario agrees to adopt the goods and services tax, GST, tax base for the Ontario portion of the harmonized sales tax. However, the MOA allows the province to designate a limited number of point-of-sale rebates for the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax, not exceeding 5%, in aggregate, of the value of the GST base in the province. The MOA commits both governments to a comprehensive integrated tax coordination agreement, CITCA, that will elaborate on the provisions of the MOA, such as those relating to provincial tax policy flexibility, e.g., point-of-sale rebates.

In response to (c) and (d), under the MOA the federal portion of the harmonized sales tax in Ontario is 5%, and, therefore, equivalent to the current GST rate. As a result, it is not anticipated that the Government of Canada will see any change to the revenues it currently collects with the GST.

**Question No. 272—Mr. Joe Comartin:**

With respect to the Police Officers Recruitment Fund: (a) how much has been allocated to the fund since its inception; (b) how much has been allocated to each jurisdiction since inception; (c) is the government aware of how many new police officers have been hired with this fund and, if so, how many in each jurisdiction; (d) what plans does the government have to help jurisdictions retain new recruits beyond the conclusion of this fund; and (e) what controls has the government put on the fund?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), as part of our safer communities strategy, this government has delivered on a key platform commitment by making funding available to provinces and territories to support the recruitment of 2,500 new front-line police officers. Budget 2008 set aside \$400 million to assist provinces and territories with the hiring of new front-line police officers. This money has been invested in a third-party trust for provinces and territories, allocated proportionately, to meet this objective.

In response to (b), all provinces and territories chose to participate in this initiative, and on June 22, 2008, the \$400 million was allocated as follows: Newfoundland and Labrador, \$5.9 million; Prince Edward Island, \$1.6 million; Nova Scotia, \$11.2 million; New Brunswick, \$8.8 million; Quebec, \$92.3 million; Ontario, \$156 million; Manitoba, \$14.4 million; Saskatchewan, \$11.7 million; Alberta, \$42.4 million; British Columbia, \$53.3 million; and each of the three territories received \$800,000. Provinces and territories have the flexibility to draw down all of these funds at any time over five years.

*Routine Proceedings*

In response to (c), to date, seven of the provinces—Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Alberta, Prince Edward Island, British Columbia and New Brunswick—have, through public media releases, announced their intentions with the funding. Publicly announced hiring includes 30 new positions in Saskatchewan, 45 officers in Nova Scotia this year as part of a plan to hire 250 officers by 2011, 329 officers in Ontario, 83 officers in Alberta and 168 officers in British Columbia. Prince Edward Island is using its share to staff and launch its Criminal Intelligence Service Bureau, and New Brunswick is investing its portion to improve regional integrated intelligence units to fight organized crime, establish a police cadet graduate bursary to attract recruits, as well as establish a safer communities and neighbourhoods enforcement unit.

In response to (d), establishing the first-ever Police Officers Recruitment Fund is a considerable investment that marks an important step forward in a way that respects provincial and territorial jurisdiction for policing while ensuring maximum flexibility. Consistent with their responsibility for policing, it is up to the provinces and territories to allocate funding as they see fit to their municipal and provincial police services. Provinces and territories are able to use the trust fund in a way that is best suited to address their local public safety priorities and policing needs. The government concluded its active role in the Police Officers Recruitment Fund on June 22, 2008, with the establishment of trust accounts for each jurisdiction.

In response to (e), consistent with their responsibility for policing, it is up to the provinces and territories to allocate funding as they see fit to their municipal and provincial police services. Provinces and territories are able to use the trust fund in a way that is best suited to address their local public safety priorities and policing needs. Provincial and territorial governments have been encouraged to report directly to their residents on the expenditures and the outcomes achieved.

**Question No. 296—Hon. Wayne Easter:**

With regard to the Agriculture Minister's 2008 request for his then-Parliamentary Secretary Guy Lauzon to conduct a study on the future of agriculture, trends in agriculture and how to attract youth to agriculture: (a) what were the findings of this report; (b) when was the report completed and presented to the Minister; (c) what communities were visited by the Parliamentary Secretary as part of the research, (i) who did he meet with in compiling his information, including their names, positions, associations represented and stakeholders in the agriculture industry, (ii) what documents were submitted for this report; (d) what were the dates, times and locations of town hall meetings held in researching this paper; (e) what were the costs associated with producing this report, including travel, meals, hospitality, meeting venues, support staff, and accommodation; (f) why has the study not been tabled in Parliament; and (g) what are the government's plans for acting on this report?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), (b), (f) and (g), no report was produced as the 40th General Election occurred ending the activities of the 39th Parliament.

In response to (c), the parliamentary secretary visited Chilliwack, British Columbia; Calgary, Alberta; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Ridgetown, Ontario; Vineland, Ontario; St. John's, Newfoundland.

In response to (i), the parliamentary secretary met with a select group of young farmers in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan,

Ontario (two sessions), and Newfoundland and Labrador. The sessions averaged between 8 and 12 participants.

The young farmers were chosen as individuals based on the recommendations of regional representatives from the following four organizations: Canadian 4-H Council, 4-H; Canadian Farm Business Management Council, CFMBC; Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers' Program, COYFP; and Canadian Young Farmers' Forum, CYFF.

Neither the parliamentary secretary nor his office was involved in suggesting or choosing participants.

The participants were chosen for their ability to engage in a frank and open discussion on issues and concerns that most directly affect young and new farmers. Participants were not chosen as representatives of any association or stakeholder organization, or in any other official capacity.

Sections 19(1) and 21(1)(b) of the Access to Information Act preclude us from sharing the names of the participants.

In response to (ii), no documents were submitted as no report was produced due to the 40th general election occurring ending the activities of the 39th Parliament.

In response to (d), the dates, times and locations of town hall meetings held in researching this paper are: Chilliwack, British Columbia, Best Western Rainbow Country Inn, July 7, 2008, 09:00 to 11:00; Calgary, Alberta, Ramada Hotel, Downtown Calgary, July 9, 2008, 09:30 to 11:00; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, University of Saskatchewan, July 10, 2008, 09:00 to 11:00; Ridgetown, Ontario, Ridgetown College, University of Guelph, August 19, 2008, 09:00 to 11:00; Vineland, Ontario, Southern Crop Protection and Food Research Centre, August 21, 2008, 09:00 to 11:00; and St. John's, Newfoundland, Quality Hotel Harbourview, August 28, 2008, 14:00 to 16:00.

In response to (e), the costs associated with producing this report, including travel, meals, hospitality, meeting venues, support staff, and accommodation were \$15,931.22

**Question No. 302—Mr. Dennis Bevington:**

With respect to political meetings held at Blatchford Lake Lodge, Northwest Territories, on the weekend of February 27 to March 1, 2009, which led to the creation of a political declaration for the Northwest Territories (NWT Declaration): (a) was the Manager, Indian and Northern Affairs Aboriginal Economic Development, Northwest Territories (Mr. Altaf Lakhani), in attendance at these meetings and, if so, why was a senior civil servant in attendance at a political meeting; (b) what, if any, role did Mr. Lakhani play in organizing these meetings; (c) what, if any, role did Mr. Lakhani play at the meetings; (d) what, if any, activities did Mr. Lakhani take part in following the meetings which were connected to the meeting or the NWT Declaration; (e) was Mr. Lakhani involved in any follow-up meetings or activities either flowing from these meetings or in connection with the NWT Declaration and, if so, when and where were these meetings held; (f) if Mr. Lakhani took part in any activities following the Blatchford Lake meetings what were these activities; (g) were government funds provided either directly or through another person or organization to organize, conduct or carry out follow-up activities related to this or other meetings or the NWT Declaration; (h) if government funds were dispersed, what were the amounts; (i) which persons or organizations received these funds; (j) under which government programs were such funds dispersed; and (k) if any government funds were dispersed, who authorized the release of these funds?

*Routine Proceedings*

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), Mr. Altaf Lakhani was in attendance as a private citizen, not in his capacity as a public servant.

In response to (b), Mr. Lakhani was an invited participant and did not play any role in organizing the meetings.

In response to (c), Mr. Lakhani was invited for the exchange of ideas.

In response to (d), there was no further involvement by Mr. Lakhani following these meetings connected to the NWT declaration.

In response to (e), there was no further involvement of Mr. Lakhani in any follow-up meetings or activities.

In response to (f), there were none.

In response to (g), government funds were not provided either directly or through another person or organization to organize, conduct or carry out follow-up activities related to this or other meetings or the NWT declaration.

In response to (h), there were none provided.

In response to (i), there were none.

In response to (j), none were dispersed.

In response to (k), none were released.

**Question No. 305—Mr. Todd Russell:**

With respect to phytosanitary management, what measures, if any, are in place to prevent the transmission or spread of potato wart and golden nematode: (a) from Newfoundland to Labrador; (b) within Labrador; (c) from Labrador to any other part of Canada; (d) if no such measures are in place, are any such measures being planned or otherwise under consideration; and (e) if so, what are they?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's, CFIA, mandate and priorities include preventing the spread of quarantine pests within Canada. Control of such pests is pursued primarily under provisions of the Plant Protection Act and, for potatoes, relevant provisions of the Seeds Regulations Part II. Newfoundland and Labrador is designated as a quarantine area in relation to potato wart, PW, and potato cyst nematode, PCN, with provisions in place to mitigate the spread of these pests from and within the province.

The primary control measures to prevent spread of PW and PCN within Newfoundland and Labrador have been the planting of pest-free seed potatoes combined with the use of varieties that are resistant to these pests. The CFIA, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the provincial government in Newfoundland have also implemented programs to support and encourage private gardeners to plant PW- and PCN-resistant varieties.

The mainland areas of Newfoundland and Labrador, commonly referred to as Labrador, have been surveyed for PW and PCN. PCN has not been found in mainland Labrador. PW is present but only in

private gardens and is not found in any of the commercial agricultural fields that exist. Measures are in place to suppress PW and prevent its spread, including soil surveys, encouragement of the use of potato varieties resistant to PW, and agricultural extension that includes good management practices that will assist in pest suppression. These measures are pursued in partnership with the provincial government.

PCN and PW are both present on the island of Newfoundland. The movement of soil, potato wart and PCN from Newfoundland is restricted legislatively under the Plant Protection Act and its regulations. In addition, under this legislation, the CFIA has the authority to impose individual notices restricting movement of regulated articles from specific gardens or fields known to be infested with PCN or PW.

Existing CFIA plant protection activities designed to prevent the spread of PCN and PW are routinely reviewed. In addition, the CFIA monitors for any changes that may indicate an increased risk of the spread of these pests to non-infested agricultural areas of Labrador or other Canadian provinces. If an increased risk were to be identified, alternative measures could be developed and implemented to mitigate the risk appropriately.

The current PCN and PW measures have proven to be effective in mitigating the risk of spreading PCN from the island of Newfoundland to Labrador and other parts of Canada, and of PW from Newfoundland and Labrador to other Canadian provinces.

Legislative restrictions for PW and PCN are specified in schedule I and schedule II of the Plant Protection Regulations, SOR/2001-287, s. 1; SOR/2004-80, s. 18.

Schedule I, entitled "Prohibited Movement within Canada", contains the following movement restriction intended to prevent potato varieties susceptible to PW from being produced on the island of Newfoundland:

3. Movement of potato varieties with blue or purple skin (except for the varieties: Brigus, Blue Mac, A.C. Blue Pride and A.C. Domino, and any potato variety to be used for research purposes by a government, an educational institution or a corporation) is prohibited from the rest of Canada into Newfoundland.

Schedule II, subsection 50(3) and sections 51 and 52, of the Plant Protection Regulations, SOR/2001-287, s. 1; SOR/2004-80, s. 18., is entitled "Restricted Movement within Canada". The relevant provisions relating to PW and PCN are provided below:

29. All plants produced within Newfoundland are restricted from moving to all other areas of Canada, based on the requirement for a movement certificate.

38. Soil, compost material, peat moss or anything with soil, compost material or peat moss attached are restricted from moving from Newfoundland to all other areas of Canada by the requirement for a movement certificate.

*Routine Proceedings*

43. In order to be moved from Newfoundland to other areas of Canada, used bags, boxes, containers and other articles used to move root-crops, soil, compost material or peat moss are required to be free from soil, compost material and peat moss, or to have been subjected to a treatment or process to eradicate PCN and PW.

49. Used vehicles and equipment that are or may be infested must be free from soil and must exit the island of Newfoundland through an inspection centre with washing stations at Argentia, Port aux Basques, St. John's or Cornerbrook.

**Question No. 308—Mr. Robert Oliphant:**

With respect to the Algoma Tankers Limited application to the Department of Finance regarding a remission order for the recently paid import duty on the new petroleum product tankers, *Algonova* and *AlgoCanada*: (a) when will a decision be rendered on this application; (b) what are the qualifications necessary for a successful application; (c) have there been any consultations with any of the following organizations regarding this application, including, the Shipbuilders Association of Canada, the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation, the Canadian Shipowners Association, the Chamber of Marine Commerce and the Ontario Marine Transportation Forums and, if so, what has been the result of those consultations?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), this application for duty remission on the two tankers imported by Algoma Tankers Limited is currently under review by the Department of Finance. Once the review is completed, the department will make its recommendation to the Minister of Finance for his consideration.

In response to (b), in any remission request, the applicant is asked to provide the department with evidence supporting its request, including, *inter alia*, the effect the payment of the duties would have on its operations. As part of the process, the department also consults with all relevant stakeholders to seek their views on the remission request. Each application is reviewed on its own merits to determine whether duty remission is in the overall economic interest of Canada. A number of factors are taken into consideration in this review, including, *inter alia*, the results of consultations with all relevant stakeholders. Once the review is completed, the department makes a recommendation to the Minister of Finance for his consideration.

In response to (c), as part of broad consultations undertaken by the Department of Finance on this remission request, views were received from the following stakeholders: Shipbuilding Association of Canada, Canadian Shipowners Association, Chamber of Marine Commerce, Algoma Central Corporation, Imperial Oil, the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation and the Ontario Marine Transportation Forum. The department also consulted officials at Industry Canada and Transport Canada. The views of all stakeholders will be fully considered as the department prepares its recommendation to the Minister of Finance.

**Question No. 310—Ms. Olivia Chow:**

With respect to the Toronto Port Authority (TPA), will the government: (a) conduct an internal and external audit, as requested in a letter to the Minister of Transport outlined by four directors of the TPA, on the management of the Port Authority by the former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) during 2008; (b) disclose the legal advice to the Board of Directors of the TPA, as obtained by the former CEO in 2008; (c) order the minutes of TPA meetings from 2008 be released from abeyance; (d) provide a justification of the \$80,000 in hospital and travel expenses in 2007 and part of 2008, incurred by the CEO, while operating a deficit; (e) provide a justification for changing the constitution of the TPA by expanding two extra members onto the Board; and (f) ensure no board member has a conflict of interest, and that all board members act in an ethical manner?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), section 41 of the Canada Marine Act requires that Canada port authorities undergo a special examination every five years, to allow an examiner to report on the port authority's practices and protocols, including those related to financial management and control. The Toronto Port Authority has indicated that it will soon undertake its second special examination under this provision, and it should be completed prior to the end of this fiscal year. These reviews are conducted by a qualified, independent auditor.

In response to (b), the legal advice provided to the board of directors of the Toronto Port Authority belongs to the authority, and the decision to disclose the advice provided rests with the board.

In response to (c), paragraph 7(2)(b) of the Port Authorities Management Regulations requires any port authority to "prepare and maintain ... at its registered office or at such other place in Canada as the board of directors thinks fit, a record of the minutes of meetings and resolutions of the board of directors and committees of directors." This requirement to keep minutes of board meetings is consistent with good governance practices. This provision does not require Canada port authorities to make minutes of meetings public. Furthermore, the minister does not hold copies of the minutes.

In response to (d), the member of Parliament for Trinity—Spadina has been provided with a listing of travel and hospitality expenses incurred by the former chief executive officer of the Toronto Port Authority in 2007 and 2008, Question No. 61, February 19, 2009.

In response to (e), section 8 of the Canada Marine Act stipulates that the board of directors of a Canada port authority shall consist of between seven and eleven members. In December 2008, the Toronto Port Authority's supplementary letters patent were amended, as permitted under the act, to increase membership on the board of directors from seven directors to nine.

A significant increase in airport operations and the need to ensure adequate representation of all port stakeholders led the government to increase membership on the board of directors at the Toronto Port Authority. The operation of an airport, in addition to a working port, requires additional governance oversight. The increase in membership was taken in the interests of strengthening the authority's governance structure and the board's ability to deal with complex issues facing the Toronto Port Authority. The individuals added to the board need to be people that know local issues and have valuable experience to bring to the table.

In response to (f), members of the board of directors at the Toronto Port Authority have a fiduciary responsibility to act in the best interests of the port. The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities takes allegations of conflict of interest on the board very seriously, and will consider the findings of any reviews or investigations related to the Toronto Port Authority.



*Routine Proceedings*

In April 2006, the then minister of transport requested that a review of the Toronto Port Authority be undertaken to ensure that the principles of accountability and good governance had been upheld in decisions and actions taken by the Toronto Port Authority. The review of the Toronto Port Authority resulted in a comprehensive report on the Toronto Port Authority and satisfied the former minister that the board and management of the Toronto Port Authority had upheld the principles of accountability and good governance.

Question No. 312—**Hon. John McCallum:**

With respect to section 162 of the Federal Accountability Act passed on December 12, 2006, what expenses were incurred by the office of the head of each department or ministry of state in fiscal year 2006-2007 for: (a) personnel; (b) transportation and communications; (c) information services, and (d) professional and special services?

**Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, this information was not centrally tracked prior to the coming into force of the Federal Accountability Act. Data gathering and reporting procedures were amended to report this information in the Public Accounts of Canada on a go forward basis commencing for the 2007-08 fiscal year.

Question No. 313—**Hon. Dan McTeague:**

With respect to the government's decision to increase the lowest personal income tax bracket from 15% to 15.5% in Budget 2006: (a) what was the justification for the increase; (b) what was the total revenue generated by the tax increase; and (c) why the government felt it was necessary to lower the rate back to 15%?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a), the lowest personal income tax rate remained at the legislated level of 16 per cent until following the budget tabled in the House of Commons on May 2, 2006.

Budget 2006 announced a permanent reduction in the lowest personal income tax rate from 16 per cent to 15.5 per cent effective July 1, 2006. Subsequently, this reduction was legislated in C-13: an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006, Royal Assent given on June 22, 2006.

More information on budget 2006 is available at [www.fin.gc.ca/budget06/bp/bptoc-eng.asp](http://www.fin.gc.ca/budget06/bp/bptoc-eng.asp).

In response to part (b), as explained in part (a), only following the budget tabled in the House of Commons on May 2, 2006 was a reduction in the lowest personal income tax rate legislated. No revenue was generated by the measure. Indeed, as detailed in the budget 2006 document (see Table 3.6), reducing the lowest rate provided total tax relief of about \$6.3 billion over the 2005-06 to 2007-08 period.

In response to part (c), the lowest personal income tax rate was reduced further to 15 per cent in the economic statement tabled in the House of Commons on October 30, 200, available at [http://www.fin.gc.ca/budtoc/2007/ec07\\_-eng.asp](http://www.fin.gc.ca/budtoc/2007/ec07_-eng.asp).

The motivation for this reduction was clearly stated in that document (please see page 7), "Canada's economic and fiscal fundamentals are rock solid, yet the world economy is experiencing turbulence and increased uncertainty. Given this global economic uncertainty, now is the time to act. Our strong fiscal position provides Canada with an opportunity that few other countries have—

to make broad-based tax reductions that will strengthen our economy, stimulate investment and create more and better jobs".

Subsequently, this reduction was legislated in C-28: an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2007 and to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on October 30, 2007, Royal Assent given on December 14, 2007.

A vast array of public-interest groups heralded this important reduction. For instance, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation cheered that "all taxpayers are benefitting today on the personal income tax side. This is certainly a very good announcement today, and it is an amount that is going to be felt and noticed by Canadian taxpayers." The Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce also proclaimed, "Canadians are overtaxed and (the economic statement 2007) announcements take concrete measures to address the situation in an immediate and bold fashion. These measures are particularly welcome as global competitive pressures intensify and underscore the need for international tax competitiveness... the reduction in the lowest marginal personal income tax rate to 15 per cent will help stimulate work effort, saving and investment, all of which have a direct bearing on productivity, competitiveness and prosperity".

Question No. 314—**Hon. Dan McTeague:**

With respect to government action in the case of Mr. Muhammad Kohail, what was every official communication with the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, while respecting Mr. Kohail's right to privacy by not revealing the substance of the communication and, specifically, (i) who initiated the communication, (ii) who was involved on behalf of the Canadian government, (iii) who was involved on behalf of the Saudi government, (iv) what was the date of the communication, (v) what was the method of communication?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, since his arrest in Saudi Arabia in January 2007, consular officials in Ottawa and in Saudi Arabia have been actively providing assistance and support to Mohamed Kohail, his brother, Sultan, and their family. In March 2008, following the death sentence imposed by the Saudi Court, the Government of Canada announced that it would seek clemency for Mohamed Kohail.

The Government of Canada has raised Mohamed Kohail's case at the ministerial level at every opportunity. During a trip to Saudi Arabia in March 2008, the then Minister for Public Safety raised the case with Prince Muqrin, President of the Saudi General Intelligence Service. The Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote and spoke to his Saudi counterpart, Prince Saud Al-Faisal in May 2008. The Minister for Natural Resources raised the case with the Saudi Oil Minister while in Jeddah in late June 2008.

*Routine Proceedings*

In December 2008, the Minister of Foreign Affairs raised the case during a phone call with Prince Saud al-Faisal. During a visit to Saudi Arabia in December 2008, the Parliamentary Secretary met with senior officials at the Saudi Human Rights Commission and the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs to raise the case. The Parliamentary Secretary also met with the Saudi Minister of Justice to reiterate the Government of Canada's concerns. In February 2009, the Minister of Agriculture raised the case to his Saudi counterpart during a visit to Saudi Arabia. Finally, in June 2009, the Minister of International Trade raised the case with the Governor of Jeddah and the President of the Saudi Human Rights Commission during a visit to Saudi Arabia. The minister also met with the Kohail family to reiterate the Government of Canada's commitment to pursuing all avenues to provide assistance to their sons.

Consular officials at the Canadian Embassy in Riyadh continue to closely monitor Mohamed Kohail's case and remain in regular contact with Saudi authorities at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by means of diplomatic notes and meetings. They are also in regular contact with prison officials in Jeddah to ensure that concerns regarding Mr. Kohail's welfare are promptly addressed. When allegations of mistreatment were brought to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' attention in 2007, consular officials immediately raised the matter with Saudi authorities, including by diplomatic note, to request a thorough investigation into the matter.

The former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and the current Chargé d'Affaires have raised the case with senior level Saudi authorities both in writing and in meetings, including the Saudi Minister of Justice, the Governor of Mecca, and the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Deputy Minister for Consular Affairs.

During an April 2008 trip to Saudi Arabia, the Director of the Consular Case Management Division and the Director of the Gulf and Maghreb Division met with key officials including the Director of Judiciary Affairs at the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In November 2008, at the Minister of Foreign Affairs' instruction, the Director General of the Consular Operations Bureau and the Director General of the Middle East Bureau met with the Saudi Chargé d'Affaires in Ottawa to raise the case. The Director of Gulf and Maghreb Division met with the Head of the Legal Department at the Saudi MFA to raise the case in November 2008.

In accordance with the Access to Information Act, Section 15, detailed responses to questions (i) to (v) could be expected to be injurious to the conduct of international affairs, and will not be released by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

**Question No. 315—Hon. Larry Bagnell:**

Since the government announced plans for the construction of a \$720 million polar ice breaker to be named HMCS Diefenbaker: (a) what progress has been made to date on this project; (b) have design contracts been awarded and, if so, to whom; (c) has the government altered its plans on the Diefenbaker by shelving the project and, if so, (i) when was the decision made, (ii) on who's recommendation, (iii) what is the rationale for the curtailment, (iv) why was this information not made public; (d) what is the latest estimated cost for the Diefenbaker; and (e) has the government decided to reassess the plans for the Diefenbaker in favour of recapitalizing the Coast Guard fleet on a more useful basis, with the support of the Canadian Armed Forces?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):**  
Mr. Speaker, budget 2008 providing funding of \$720M to procure a

Polar Icebreaker to replace Canadian Coast Guard Ship (CCGS) Louis S. St. Laurent, currently Canada's most capable Heavy Icebreaker, at the end of her planned operational life in 2017. The Polar Icebreaker will provide Canada with an enhanced Arctic capability to operate farther North and over a longer period each year than is currently the case.

In response to (a), to date the following progress has been achieved:

(1) Establishment of positions and hiring of key project personnel;

(2) Broad consultation with internal and external project stakeholders to develop a preliminary mission profile for this new class of vessel; and with project definition phase of the project.

In response to (b), design contracts have not yet been awarded.

In response to (c), the procurement process for the acquisition of the Polar Icebreaker, to be named CCGS John G. Diefenbaker, is unfolding on schedule. The government has not altered any plans in this regard and remains fully committed to this project as a key component of Canada's Northern Strategy initiative.

In response to (d), the total estimated cost for the project is \$720 million.

In response to (e), the government has not reassessed its plans regarding the Diefenbaker. The project remains on schedule and delivery is planned for 2017. The Canadian Coast Guard's current approach to fleet operations is that all vessels are multi-tasked as the most efficient and effective means of maintaining its assets and delivering on its mandated programs and providing support to and working closely with other government departments and agencies.

**Question No. 324—Mr. Bruce Hyer:**

With regards to passenger rail in Northern Ontario: (a) have there been any proposals, initiatives, reports or studies on expanding service to Thunder Bay since 1990; (b) what is the estimated cost of expanding service to Thunder Bay; (c) what would be the estimated boost in ridership with extension to Thunder Bay; (d) what is the total cost of current Via Rail operations in the region; (e) what is the total revenue from the region; (f) what capital assets are owned in the region; and (g) what is the proportion of freight traffic to passenger traffic in the region?

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), in August/September 2000, VIA Rail undertook a preliminary internal review of a number of train service proposals including the re-routing of "The Canadian" through the Thunder Bay/Lake Superior route on Canadian Pacific Railway infrastructure. This would also necessitate the introduction of a Capreol-Hornepayne-Winnipeg local service to maintain access for remote communities along the present route of "The Canadian" on the Canadian National Railway line.

In response to (b), the incremental costs of introducing this combined service change, based on the 2000 estimate, would be \$5.9 million annual operating costs plus capital expenditures of \$17.9 million for rolling stock and stations.

*Routine Proceedings*

In response to (c), a market assessment of the potential impact on ridership levels has not been undertaken.

In response to (d), the total annual operating cost of VIA Rail operations in the area (i.e. Sudbury – White River service) is \$2.6 million.

In response to e) Total revenue from the region (i.e. Sudbury – White River service) is \$183,000.

In response to (f), capital assets owned in the region include station facilities in Washago, Sudbury Junction, Capreol, and Foleyet.

In response to g) VIA does not have information with respect to the proportion of freight traffic.

Question No. 329—**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:**

With respect to Health Canada and the Canadian Apheresis Group: (a) is the Minister of Health going to submit a Treasury Board submission that would renew the mandate for funding that was given by the Canadian Blood Committee and the Canadian Blood Agency (October 1997); and (b) since existing funding is expected to expire on March 15, 2010, will the government show a renewed commitment to this group by granting permanent funding?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the 1997 federal-provincial-territorial memorandum of understanding on the establishment of the National Blood Authority, Health Canada provides funds to the Canadian Blood Services, CBS, for research and development on blood safety and effectiveness (\$5M/annum since 2000-2001). Beginning in 2008, Health Canada also provides funds to CBS to improve the delivery of organ and tissue donation and transplantation activities in Canada (\$3.58M /annum between April 2008 and March 2013).

Funding to the Canadian Apheresis Group ended in 2003. There is no current funding agreement between Health Canada nor the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Apheresis Group.

Question No. 337—**Hon. Shawn Murphy:**

With regard to the November 2006 funding announcement made by then-Health Minister Tony Clement detailing a five-point plan for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) funding in Canada, what are the details regarding: (a) the status of the commitment to sponsor an ASD stakeholder symposium; (b) the status of the commitment to establish a chair focusing on interventions and treatment for ASD; (c) the status of the commitment to undertake a consultation process to see how an ASD surveillance program could be set up through the Public Health Agency of Canada; (d) the status of the commitment to establish a dedicated web page on the Health Canada website with ASD information and resources; (e) the status of the commitment to designate the Health Policy Branch of Health Canada as the ASD lead for actions related to ASD at the federal health portfolio level; and (f) how much federal funding these and other autism programs will receive during the fiscal year 2009-2010?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), with regard to the commitment to sponsor an ASD stakeholder symposium, in November 2007, a national symposium on autism research was hosted by Canadian Institutes of Health Research, CIHR, to share knowledge and to support dialogue on future research priorities. The report from this Symposium is now available on the CIHR web site.

In response to (b), with regard to the commitment to establish a chair focusing on interventions and treatment for ASD, funding for an autism research chair to address issues related to treatments and interventions was announced at Simon Fraser University on October

20, 2007. This joint initiative with the Government of British Columbia is being supported with \$1M in federal funding over five years. Efforts to establish a Chair are currently underway by Simon Fraser University.

In response to (c), between November 2007 and May 2008, the Public Health Agency of Canada, PHAC, undertook a consultation process to examine options for the development of an Autism Spectrum Disorders, ASD, surveillance program in Canada. This process was guided by a steering committee comprised of ASD experts, and included three components:

1. an environmental scan of the current scope of ASD surveillance activities in Canada;
2. a technical workshop on the information needs and data collection options for ASD surveillance; and
3. a broader stakeholder consultation on the information needs of ASD communities and how they would like surveillance information disseminated to them.

The results of this consultation process will be used by PHAC as it undertakes a new national surveillance system for developmental disorders such as autism. This initiative, a component of the federal government's 2008 action plan to protect human health from environmental contaminants, will be a national sentinel surveillance program to track and assess the linkages between environmental contamination and developmental disorders such as sensory impairments, autism spectrum disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Using centres for surveillance expertise, data will be collected from a variety of local sources such as schools, hospitals, community paediatricians, and other health professionals.

In response to (d), with respect to the commitment to establish a dedicated web page on the Health Canada website with ASD information and resources, the website has been created. It provides facts and information on ASD, as well as links to Canadian and International autism organizations. The website can be found at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/dc-ma/autism-eng.php> As well, in 2007-08 Health Canada provided \$50,000 to the Offord Centre for Child Studies (a research centre dedicated to improving the life quality of children with mental health and developmental problems) to support the dissemination of the latest evidence pertaining to autism through the Canadian Autism Intervention Research Network, CAIRN, via the Network's website. The Canadian Autism Intervention Network, CAIRN, is a group of parents, clinicians and scientists working to conduct research in early intervention in autism, and is part of the Offord Centre for Child Studies. The web page on the Health Canada website links to the CAIRN website in order to direct Canadians to evidence-based information of a more clinical nature, and complement the content on the Departmental site.

*Routine Proceedings*

In response to (e), with respect to the commitment to designate the Health Policy Branch of Health Canada as the ASD lead for actions related to ASD at the federal health portfolio level, this was done in 2007. Since then, the Health Policy Branch has become the Strategic Policy Branch, and the Chronic and Continuing Care Division within the Branch holds the lead on the ASD file.

In response to (f), with respect to federal funding for autism related initiatives during fiscal year 2009-10, the federal government has committed \$200,000 to Simon Fraser University, as part of the \$1M over five years for the Autism Research Chair. In addition, the federal government has a multi-year contribution agreement with the Offord Centre for Child Studies, with \$25,000 in 2008-2009 and \$50,000 in 2009-10, for a total of \$75,000 over two years. This funding will support the development and dissemination of research priorities in Autism Spectrum Disorders, ASD, among parents, policy makers, researchers, health professionals, health educators and individuals with ASD. This work will be accomplished through a national on-line survey, a national conference in fall 2009, and by further updating the Canadian Autism Intervention Research Network website, which is the primary bilingual source for disseminating evidence-based information about ASD in Canada. In fiscal year 2009-10, CIHR has currently committed approximately \$3.4 million towards autism research.

**Question No. 342—Mrs. Alexandra Mendes:**

Concerning the establishment of future permanent full service passport offices throughout Canada: (a) does Passport Canada have a long term plan to increase the number of permanent full service passport offices, (i) if yes, what is the break down and timeline for the establishments of these offices, (ii) if no, is Passport Canada looking at developing such a plan; (b) has Passport Canada considered opening full service passport offices utilising the infrastructure that currently exists in local Service Canada outlets; (c) has Passport Canada considered using the trained staff that are tasked as frontline customer service worker to staff new regional full service passport offices; and (d) has Passport Canada looked into regional disparities in obtaining passports in relation to their current full service offices, (i) if yes, what recommendations were presented, (ii) if not, does Passport Canada intend on conducting such a study?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, I am informed by Passport Canada that in response to (a), Passport Canada finances its operations from the fees charged for passports and other travel documents. The agency must generate sufficient revenues to meet expenditures. It periodically reviews demand patterns to evaluate whether it is feasible to open new offices. Where demand is not sufficient to sustain a passport office, the agency now offers passport services through partnership agreements. In 2003, 30 passport offices were operating across the country. Since then, the agency has opened three additional passport offices and, through partnerships with Canada Post and Service Canada, now has 230 passport points of service. Consequently, 95 per cent of Canadians now have in-person access to a passport point of service within 100 km of their residence.

As a Special Operating Agency, Passport Canada does not receive an annual parliamentary appropriation—the service the Agency provides is supported by applicants rather than taxpayers. Passport Canada operates under a revolving fund which allows it to accumulate an annual surplus (or deficit) of up to \$4 million. Passport Canada can also carry over surplus revenues from year to year to offset future shortfalls.

(ii) Other than a new regional office in Kelowna, British Columbia, scheduled to open in 2010, Passport Canada's long-term plan does not include the opening of additional permanent full-service passport offices.

In response to (b), the cost to adequately equip and provide the security required for a full-service passport office ranges from \$1.2 million to \$4 million. Were Passport Canada to extend full-service status to all 320 Service Canada outlets, the required investment would be significant. The existing Service Canada network would also require substantial physical modifications to accommodate additional applicant volume and to meet security criteria. Current and new employees would also need considerable training to perform their new duties.

In response to (c), front-line examiners are trained to make decisions about whether a passport can be issued. The training is intensive, in-depth and is part of the expense required for each new regional office. Passport Canada's human resource practices are fair and transparent. Positions are posted as they become available and all applicants are screened against a series of criteria including skills, knowledge, education and abilities.

In response to (d), Passport Canada's receiving agent network has considerably broadened access to passport services throughout the country, especially in rural, remote and northern locations. Given the existing broad access to service, any passport expansion would result in marginal improvements in service to the majority of Canadians at a significantly higher cost.

(i), the Passport Canada Mobile Passport Unit, created in 2007, has increased accessibility in rural regions and border communities. This minimizes delays due to incomplete applications. Since January 2007, the Mobile Passport Unit has held 166 clinics and accepted more than 42,000 applications.

Passport Canada continues to explore ways to improve client services while prudently managing its funds.

**Question No. 343—Ms. Christiane Gagnon:**

With respect to the defence of the former lieutenant governor of Quebec, Ms. Lise Thibault, regarding the allegations of her spending while in office: (a) how much has the government spent on legal fees associated with the defence of the former lieutenant governor of Quebec; and (b) how much will the government spend on legal fees associated with the defence of Ms. Thibault?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Justice Canada is not implicated in the defence of Mrs. Lise Thibault.

If proceedings are eventually undertaken against Mrs. Thibault, employees from Canadian Heritage may be called as witnesses. Counsel from our office could then be consulted to advise government employees of their rights and obligations and of the progress of the proceedings.

In certain cases, if the situation and interests of the Government of Canada require it, government employees may be accompanied by Justice counsel.

*Routine Proceedings*

We estimate that the time and fees incurred by the Department of Justice in this case will remain minimal and will be incurred only to preserve the interests of the Government of Canada and its employees.

**Question No. 344—Mr. Thomas Mulcair:**

With regards to Bill C-48, An Act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make certain payments, passed during the First Session of the 38th and: (a) the Post-Secondary Education Infrastructure Trust, (i) does the government know which projects received funding, (ii) what are the amounts involved, (iii) to what were allocated; (b) the Public Transit Capital Trust, (i) does the government know which projects received funding, (ii) what are the amounts involved, (iii) to what were the funds allocated; (c) the Affordable Housing Trust, (i) does the government know which projects received funding, (ii) what are the amounts involved, (iii) to what were the funds allocated; (d) the Off-Reserve Aboriginal Housing Trust, (i) does the government know which projects received funding, (ii) what are the amounts involved, (iii) to what were the funds allocated; and (e) the Northern Housing Trust, (i) does the government know which projects received funding, (ii) what are the amounts involved, (iii) to what were the funds allocated?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, trusts are financial vehicles used by the Government of Canada to transfer funds to provinces and territories in order to meet urgent, short-term pressures in areas of shared national priority. The trust mechanism gives provincial and territorial governments the flexibility to withdraw funding in support of the identified objectives, according to their respective needs and priorities, over the lifespan of each trust.

In response to (i) and (ii), trusts established pursuant to Bill C-48, five trusts were established pursuant to Bill C-48, An act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make certain payments, which received Royal Assent in July 2005. These trusts were highlighted in the budget presented to the House of Commons on May 2, 2006:

\$1 billion for the post-secondary education infrastructure trust, to support investments to promote innovation and accessibility, including investments in university and college infrastructure and equipment. The funding is notionally allocated over two years on an equal per capita basis among provinces and territories;

\$900 million for the public transit capital trust, in support of capital investments in public transit infrastructure both as a means to reduce traffic congestion and to reduce carbon dioxide and other emissions. The funding is notionally allocated over three years on an equal per capita basis among provinces and territories;

\$800 million for the affordable housing trust to help address short-term pressures with regard to the supply of affordable housing. The funding is notionally allocated over three years on an equal per capita basis among provinces and territories;

\$300 million for the off-reserve aboriginal housing trust to help provinces address short-term housing needs for aboriginal Canadians living off-reserve. The funding is notionally allocated over three years among provinces based on the provincial share of the aboriginal population living off-reserve; and

\$300 million for the northern housing trust to help meet short-term pressures with regard to the supply of affordable housing in the North. The funding is notionally allocated over three years among the three territories as follows: \$50 million each for the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, plus an additional \$150 million for urgent needs in Nunavut.

Payments to the trusts were made on September 27, 2006, after the Government was able to confirm that sufficient funds were available from surpluses in the two fiscal years 2005-06 and 2006-07.

In response to (iii), Projects receiving funding, allocation, and amounts involved, operating principles were established for each trust. Once the funds have been transferred to the trustee, the trustee, and subsequently the provinces and territories, are accountable for the distribution and use of those funds.

**Question No. 346—Ms. Ruby Dhalla:**

What funds, grants, loans and loan guarantee has the government issued through the Department of Canadian Heritage, over \$1,000, since January 1, 2006, and in each case where applicable: (a) the name of the recipient; (b) the constituency of the recipient; (c) the program for which the grant, loan, or loan guarantee was given; (d) the date the application was received; (e) the amount of the individual grant, loan, or loan guarantee; (f) the date the payment was made; and (g) the total amount from all programs received by the recipient in that calendar year?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Canadian Heritage's information systems do not capture financial information by federal riding.

**Question No. 348—Ms. Ruby Dhalla:**

With regard to government advertising, since January 24, 2006: (a) how much was spent per print advertisement, listed alphabetically by supplier; (b) in which constituencies were the print advertisements distributed; (c) what dates did the print advertisements run; (d) how much was spent per radio advertisement, listed alphabetically by supplier; (e) on what stations did the radio advertisement air; (f) on what dates and times did the radio advertisements air; (g) how much was spent per internet advertisement, listed alphabetically by supplier; (h) on what websites were the internet advertisements posted; (i) how many hits did each internet advertisement receive; (j) how much was spent per television advertisement, listed alphabetically by supplier; (k) on what stations did the television advertisement air; and (l) on what dates and times did the television advertisement air?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the information requested in question No. 348 is too voluminous and costly to produce. The data required to adequately respond to the question is contained on 29,472 pages, in English only. Furthermore, given the magnitude of this question, it is not practical or cost effective for the government to translate these documents.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-eng.html>

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 350—Hon. Carolyn Bennett:**

With respect to the Natural Health Products Directorate (NHPD): (a) is the 2010 compliance deadline purely an internal deadline or one that should be of concern to product licence applicants; (b) is the current deadline is not enforced given the current large unaddressed backlog of applications; (c) will the backlog be solved simply through wholesale product rejection; (d) are reasonable application reviews taking place so that Canadians can enjoy access to safe, high quality natural health products; (e) will the government amend the Food and Drugs Act to establish a separate regulatory category for natural health products; and (f) will the government provide long term funding to the NHPD to act as the regulator for natural health products?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), Health Canada has set a goal for itself to address the Natural Health Product, NHP, product licensing backlog by March 31, 2010. This date is not set out in law or regulation—it is an internal deadline adopted by Health Canada. The only date set out in the regulation is December 31, 2009 at which time all natural health products which were previously issued a drug identification number under the Food and Drug Regulations will be required to have a product licence, as per Section 108 of the Natural Health Products Regulations.

Health Canada is confident that, building on our progress to date, we can address the backlog by March 31, 2010.

In response to (b), the Natural Health Products Directorate, together with the Health Products and Food Branch Inspectorate, are currently developing a compliance strategy for 2010.

Significant progress has been made to address the backlog of applications: as of June 2009, 47% of the product licence application backlog has been completed or is in the process of being completed and of the remaining 6661 applications, 48% have been addressed—meaning that the applicant has received at least one deficiency notice from NHPD as part of the assessment of their application. Of the product licence applications not considered in the backlog, 59% have been completed or are in the process of being completed and of the remaining 4836 applications, 25% have been addressed—meaning that the applicant has received at least one deficiency notice from NHPD as part of the assessment of their application. Of all product licence applications received since 2004, NHPD has completed or is in the process of completing 70%.

In response to (c), Health Canada continues to review applications and issue regulatory decisions. Some of those decisions will be refusals. To date, however, there have been more licences than refusals.

The Natural Health Product Regulations, NHPR, require that an applicant submit information to support the safety, efficacy and quality of a product for assessment by the NHPD. An estimated 25-30% of applications received do not include enough information or relevant information to allow the directorate, on behalf of the minister, to conclude that the product is safe and effective.

An applicant that does not include sufficient information in an application, to allow a licence to be issued is provided with an opportunity to submit further information to support the licensing of the product; in 26% of submissions, the applicant chooses not to take this opportunity and does not respond to a request from the NHPD to do so.

In response to (d), Health Canada's priority is to protect and promote the health of Canadians by ensuring access to natural health products that are safe, effective, and of high quality. Only NHPs that are supported by adequate levels of evidence and carry appropriate labels will be authorized for sale and issued a product licence.

The safety and efficacy evaluation of a natural health product, NHP, includes an assessment of its recommended conditions of use and the existing totality of evidence related to the NHP. The information that is considered acceptable by NHPD in reviewing applications includes a range of data including:

(i) safety and efficacy information that is developed by the NHPD and made available to product licence applicants such as ingredient and product monographs and labelling standards (nearly 150 of these are now available and has been used by applicants to allow for the licensing of thousands of products);

(ii) reference to safety and efficacy information published reference texts and pharmacopeia (e.g., texts for homeopathic medicines and traditional chinese medicines);

(iii) reference to safety and efficacy information from small-scale trials that is publicly available from a variety of sources;

(iv) reference to relevant decisions made by other regulatory agencies.

In response to (e), Bill C-51, An Act to Amend the Food and Drugs Act, died on the Order Paper with the dissolution of Parliament in September 2008. Consultations with stakeholders resulted in revisions and additions to the Bill, which were to be introduced during review by Committee.

One proposed addition was the introduction of a definition for NHPs at the level of the act, clarifying that NHPs are separate from drugs. It is important to note that the proposed amendments to the Food and Drugs Act would not have affected the way that NHPs are regulated in Canada. Under the Natural Health Products Regulations, NHPs are already regulated separately from drugs. The standards of evidence used to assess the risks and benefits of NHPs will continue to incorporate history of use, traditional uses and cultural practices.

In response to (f), Health Canada remains committed to ensuring safe, effective and high quality NHPs. In budget 2008, \$33 million over two years was dedicated to implement a new approach to the regulation of NHPs and ensure the safety of Canadians. The government is committed to ensuring that the regulation of NHPs balances the protection of consumers' health and safety with the freedom to choose alternative products.

**Question No. 353—Mr. Paul Szabo:**

With regards to the Canadian Institute for Health Research: (a) how much has their budget been for each year since their inception; (b) how much of that has been spent each year on research related to reproduction technologies; (c) how much of that has been spent each year on research related to stem cell research; and (d) how much of that has been spent each year on embryonic stem cell research?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's, CIHR, total parliamentary appropriations since inception are as follows:

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2000-01: \$401.3 million  
 2001-02: \$553.8 million  
 2002-03: \$651.2 million  
 2003-04: \$696.9 million  
 2004-05: \$757.9 million  
 2005-06: \$813.1 million  
 2006-07: \$863.5 million  
 2007-08: \$993.7 million  
 2008-09: \$974.1 million

CIHR currently estimates its 2009-10 total appropriations to be approximately \$983.9 million, \$973.1 million of which has already been approved by the Treasury Board.

In response to (b) total estimated funding for reproductive technology per fiscal year since inception to 2008/09 is as follows:

2000-01: \$294,000  
 2001-02: \$341,000  
 2002-03: \$1.2 million  
 2003-04: \$2.8 million  
 2004-05: \$3.4 million  
 2005-06: \$3.4 million  
 2006-07: \$4.2 million  
 2007-08: \$5.1 million  
 2008-09: \$5.0 million

In response to (c), total estimated funding for stem cell research per fiscal year since inception to 2008/09 is as follows:

2000-01: \$7.9 million  
 2001-02: \$10.2 million  
 2002-03: \$13.9 million  
 2003-04: \$17.1 million  
 2004-05: \$20.3 million  
 2005-06: \$23.6 million  
 2006-07: \$29.9 million  
 2007-08: \$35.0 million  
 2008-09: \$38.0 million

In response to (d), total estimated funding for embryonic stem cell research, a subset of stem cell research, per fiscal year since inception to 2008/09 is as follows:

2000-01: —  
 2001-02: \$189,000  
 2002-03: \$492,000  
 2003-04: \$619,000  
 2004-05: \$766,000  
 2005-06: \$770,000  
 2006-07: \$1.2 million  
 2007-08: \$2.3 million  
 2008-09: \$3.6 million

**Question No. 360—Mrs. Carol Hughes:**

With regard to interest on advance deposits from corporate taxpayers: (a) what is the total amount of outstanding deposits; (b) what are the 30 largest amounts of outstanding deposits by company; (c) what has been the amount of interest paid over the last five years; and (d) over the last five years, which companies have refused to be repaid outstanding deposits?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to advance deposits from corporate taxpayers, what follows is the response from the Canada Revenue Agency, CRA, to the above-noted question. Please note that the CRA's reply includes information from fiscal years 2004-2005 to 2007-2008.

In response to (a), the total amount of outstanding advance deposits from corporate taxpayers, as of May 31, 2008, was \$4.4 billion.

In response to (b), please note that the confidentiality provisions of the Income tax Act, specifically Section 241(1), prohibit the CRA from either directly or indirectly disclosing "taxpayer information". As a result of this prohibition, the CRA cannot provide the information in the manner requested.

In response to (c), as the CRA data banks do not separate refund interest related to advance deposits from any other type of refund interest paid to corporate taxpayers, the information cannot be provided in the manner requested. However, the total amount of refund interest paid over the previous five years, 2004-2008, including interest on advance deposits, was \$3.1 billion.

In response to (d), please note that the confidentiality provisions of the Income tax Act, specifically Section 241(1), prohibit the CRA from directly or indirectly disclosing "taxpayer information". As a result of this prohibition, the CRA cannot provide the information in the manner requested.

**Question No. 364—Mr. Alex Atamanenko:**

With regard to the Joint Supply Ship program: (a) what is the total amount of spending to date on the project; (b) what is the current staffing level of the project; and (c) what are the expected costs of a possible cancellation?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), total expenditures on the joint support ship project as of 17 June 2009 were \$44 million.

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In response to (b), the staffing level of the joint support ship project as of 17 June 2009 was 31 personnel.

In response to (c), as the only contracts currently in place are for engineering and management support on an as required tasking basis, there would be no costs associated with any project cancellation.

**Question No. 365—Mr. Alex Atamanenko:**

With regard to National Defence Public Affairs: (a) for the previous 12 months, what is the total number of media requests received; (b) what is the average time of response to questions; (c) what is the total number of questions which did not receive a response; and (d) what number of requests came from international media?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), readily accessible departmental records indicate that the total number of media queries received by the Department of National Defence between June 23, 2008 and June 23, 2009 was 2,900, which includes all queries received at National Defence Headquarters and those reported through the regional and local offices.

In response to (b), the average response time was 12 hours.

In response to (c) approximately 17% of the total number of queries were not answered by the reporter's stated deadline.

In response to (d) readily accessible departmental records do not provide information on the origins of the media requests; therefore, it was not possible within the time allotted to determine which requests came from international media.

**Question No. 366—Mr. Alex Atamanenko:**

With regard to Canadian participation in the Joint Strike Fighter program: (a) what has been spent on the project, broken down by year and program component; (b) what have been industrial regional benefits associated with the program, by year and project component; and (c) what would be the future costs of becoming a level two participant in the program?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response (a), total Department of National Defence expenditures to date (29 June 09) on the joint strike fighter program are US \$142.57 million. Spending is not tracked by year and project component but rather by phase as outlined below.

i) For concept development, which occurred between 1997 and 2001, the Department of National Defence spent US \$10 million.

(ii) For the system design and development phase, which began in 2002 and will conclude in 2013, the Department of National Defence has spent US \$94.35 million. No further payments are required for system design and development.

(iii) For production sustainment follow-on development, commencing in 2006 and continuing until 2051, the Department of National Defence has spent US \$38.22 million.

In response to (b), to date, the total value of joint strike fighter program contracts awarded to Canadian companies is CND \$325 million.

In response to (c), level II participation was only possible in the system design and development phase of the program. The program no longer distinguishes between levels of partners.

**Question No. 370—Hon. Bob Rae:**

With regards to the case of Omar Khadr, currently held in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba: (a) what recommendations have been made by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade or any other government agency to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, or his staff, with regards to Omar Khadr; (b) in which meetings was the topic of his legal situation and future plans for reintegration raised and in what capacity; and (c) what documentation exists in this regard?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, the case of Omar Khadr, like other consular cases, is the subject of regular advice from and discussion among officials, including legal counsel in light of ongoing litigation. These discussions and any documents generated in connection therewith cannot be disclosed given the ongoing litigation, Privacy Act concerns as well as other protections afforded to information exempt from disclosure under the Access to Information Act.

**Question No. 371—Hon. Bob Rae:**

With regard to the operation and budget of Canadian diplomatic missions: (a) which embassies and consulates have experienced budget cuts since 2006; (b) which embassies and consulates have experienced personnel downsizing; (c) which embassies and consulates have been closed since 2006; and (d) how many Canadian diplomatic missions, including embassies and consulates are there around the world?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), diplomatic mission budgets are subject to constant fluctuations due to evolving operational requirements. Budget increases and decreases occur regularly in-year and from one year to the next for a variety of reasons including position creation and deletions, currency fluctuations, adjustments to previous year's anomalies in reference level, incremental positions to support growth of representation from other government departments, among others.

In response to (b), since 2006, 26 diplomatic missions have experienced a decrease in personnel.

Abidjan (Ivory Coast)

Alma Ata (Kazakhstan)

Athens (Greece)

Bandar Seri Begawan (Brunei)

Bangkok (Thailand)

Brasilia (Brazil)

Bratislava (Slovakia)

Buenos Aires (Argentina)

Colombo (Sri Lanka)

Conakry (Guinea)

Denver (USA)

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Tallinn (Estonia)

Tehran (Iran)

Tunis (Tunisia)

Vatican Vienna — Embassy (Austria)

Warsaw (Poland)

In response to (c), since 2006, 11 diplomatic missions have been closed, namely: Phnom Penh (2009); Hamburg (2009); Tucson (2009); Cape Town (2009); Sarajevo (2009); Lilongwe (2009); Milan (2007); St. Petersburg (2007); Fukuoka (2007); Osaka (2007); and Libreville (2006).

In response to (d), there are currently 318 diplomatic missions abroad. These include: Embassies; High Commissions; Embassy/High Commission of Canada Program Offices; Offices of the Embassy / High Commission; Representative Offices — Multilateral or Permanent; Consulates General; Consulates; Consular Agencies; and Honorary Consulates.

**Question No. 373—Hon. Bob Rae:**

With regards to Canada's involvement in Pakistan, has the government offered support to the Pakistani government to combat the incursion in the north and, if so, (i) how much money has been dedicated and through what economic channels, (ii) to which initiatives was it directed, (iii) what documentation exists in this regard?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to supporting Pakistan's government and long-term development, as both are important factors in achieving regional and global stability and security. The Government of Canada is not providing direct monetary support to the Pakistani government specifically to combat the incursion in the north. However, Canada remains concerned for the fate of millions of the internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the pressures on the Government of Pakistan as a result of the military offensive against the Taliban. In support for these displaced persons, Canada has pledged \$8 million for the crisis and we continue to monitor the situation to assess whether further assistance will be required. Canada also has a long-standing and diverse development cooperation relationship with Pakistan which includes the Canada-Pakistan Debt For Education Conversion valued at \$117 million. Our total bilateral aid allocation to Pakistan last fiscal year was \$44 million, and Canada has also provided approximately \$10 million to support reconstruction activities following the 2005 South Asia Earthquake. Our core bilateral assistance to Pakistan is also expected to rise to \$50 million per year in coming years. CIDA's bilateral program is currently focused on supporting the transition to

civilian government and promotes national cohesiveness by focusing on democratic governance, basic public education, equality between men and women, and stimulating sustainable economic growth. This government is committed to working closely with the Government of Pakistan in addressing the challenges it faces and their implications for regional and global security.

**Question No. 378—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:**

With regard to aid for the Atlantic Canada Fishery: (a) how much funding has been allocated to each province from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' recent \$65 million funding announcement; (b) what sectors of the fishery will receive the funding; (c) has any funding been allocated to support loss of income among fishermen; (d) does the government plan to contribute funding for the retirement of lobster licenses; (e) does the government plan to implement changes to the Employment Insurance system that will assist workers in the fishery sector; (f) has any new funding been allocated for industry infrastructure; (g) has any new funding been allocated toward research and development; (h) has any new funding been allocated toward easing access to credit for those in the fishery; and (i) what is the breakdown of the funding for each fiscal year from 2009 through 2014?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, on June 10, 2009 the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced \$65 million in new funding to help the Atlantic lobster fishery. These measures will help harvesters adapt to the extraordinary market conditions created by the global recession. This funding includes \$15 million in immediate, short term support to assist qualified low-income harvesters severely harmed by the collapse in market demand for their products. This funding also includes \$50 million in longer-term financial assistance to support industry to develop and implement sustainability plans.

With regard to (a), the availability of this funding will be based on eligibility criteria, which is currently being developed. While the programs are available to eligible lobster harvesters in Quebec and Atlantic Canada, the funding will not be allocated by province.

With regard to (b), these programs, the short term transitional measures and the Atlantic lobster sustainability measures will be made available to licenced lobster harvesters in Quebec and Atlantic Canada.

With regard to (c), the short term transitional measures comprise \$15 million of the announced funding and are for licenced lobster harvesters who have experienced a significant drop in income from lobster harvesting in 2009. This program would only be available for the 2009 fishing season.

With regard to (d), the details of the program are currently being developed.

With regard to (e), changes to the employment insurance program are not part of this initiative.

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With regard to (f) and (g), the government has also made other efforts to support the lobster industry. On May 22, 2009, the government announced that it is directing \$10 million from the Community Adjustment Fund, CAF, to the Atlantic provinces and Quebec for activities to improve marketing, assist in innovation and develop products and technologies in the lobster industry. This CAF funding may also be used by fleets to organize and develop sustainability plans for consideration for funding under the Atlantic lobster sustainability measures. CAF will be implemented by through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions.

With regard to (h), the current economic situation is also creating difficulties for the industry to access capital. To help alleviate this challenge, Budget 2009: Canada's Economic Action Plan provided many measures which improve access to credit, including new funding to the Business Development Bank of Canada, the creation of a Business Credit Availability Program and a new Canadian Secured Credit Facility.

With regard to (i), the program details for the short term transitional measures and the Atlantic lobster sustainability measures are currently under development.

**Question No. 382—Hon. John McKay:**

With respect to Canadians who suffer severe and life-threatening adverse reactions to synthetic insulins and are unable to obtain domestically an alternative and reliable supply of animal-based insulin at a reasonable cost and pursuant to our previous Order Paper question: (a) has the Minister pursued or will the Minister pursue an agreement with the United States Food and Drug Administration to harmonize the regulations regarding approval for animal insulin, thereby enabling manufacturers to enter the North American market; (b) has the Minister pursued or will the Minister pursue a concerted education effort on animal based insulin by Health Canada aimed at both physicians and patients; (c) has the Minister pursued or will the Minister pursue a discussion with the Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA), which enjoys charitable tax status, to ensure that the treatment protocols that are sponsored by manufacturers include a clear statement on the safety and efficacy of animal insulin and that the CDA indicate what steps patients should take to obtain animal insulin in the event of adverse reactions; and (d) has the Minister pursued or will the Minister pursue subsidies for patients who are unable to afford animal insulin because of the excessive price?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), despite encouragements and repeated discussion with three manufacturers of animal insulin preparations, and despite the fact that these manufacturers were made aware of the potential financial incentives to them, including the reduction, even to zero, of fees charged for review of therapeutic products, they indicated that, without a sufficiently large, and guaranteed, market, none of the incentives offered were of sufficient interest to them.

It should be noted that two pork derived insulin products are already approved for market in Canada. Nonetheless, should there be additional applications for animal insulins and simultaneous filing in both Canada and the United States, in line with a memorandum of understanding and ongoing collaboration on a wide-variety of issues with the US, Health Canada would ensure that all regulatory requirements are harmonised between the two countries. Harmonisation of regulatory approaches and requirements is already an ongoing activity, and would not be limited to a single class of product(s).

In response to (b), Health Canada is working actively on an educational plan and materials to ensure that the medical community

is aware of the issues surrounding the use of insulin of animal origin vs. biosynthetic insulin. These activities are directed at both physicians and patients.

In response to (c), Health Canada does not have the authority to pursue statements in treatment protocols through the Canadian Diabetes Association, CDA. As a professional body, the CDA is independent of the federal government. Despite this, Health Canada can introduce appropriate statements on the labels for all insulin products. The intent of these statements would be to inform physicians in a continuous manner of the reported issues surrounding animal vs. biosynthetic insulin products. Since labels contain a Consumer Information Section, patients would also be informed.

In addition, Health Canada is considering the publication of a short article on the subject in the Canadian Adverse Reaction Bulletin and even send letters to the editors of several continuous medical education publications to reinforce the messages. Finally, there may be an opportunity to update the Fact Sheet, published by Health Canada, on the treatment of diabetes.

In response to (d), the Canada Health Act requires provinces and territories to provide coverage of medically necessary pharmaceutical drugs administered in hospitals. However, there is no federal legal requirement for them to provide such coverage outside of a hospital setting. Provinces and territories of their own accord have developed publicly-funded pharmaceutical insurance plans, including insulin, and decide the terms and conditions for such plans for their residents, including eligible population groups, formularies, and pricing. The 2004 Health Accord has provided substantial additional funding to strengthen health care over a 10-year period to provincial and territorial governments, which they may use to enhance and expand publicly-funded drug plans, including coverage of increased drug costs for their residents.

**Question No. 383—Hon. John McKay:**

Regarding the progress achieved thus far by the Department of International Cooperation and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in the implementation of The Development Assistance Accountability Act, 2008: (a) what steps have the Minister and CIDA taken to implement the Act, specifically, what consultations, meetings, and reviews have the Minister and CIDA conducted in order to examine how future Official Development Assistance (ODA) disbursements by CIDA are to accord with the Act; (b) how many programs now accord with the mandate of the Act and what percentage of Canada's ODA expenditures now accord with the mandate of the Act; and (c) if no progress has been made in implementing the Act, what measures will the Minister and CIDA adopt to ensure accordance with the Act?

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), after the act came into force in June 2008, a vice president-level steering committee on the implementation of the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act, ODA AA, was created to provide strategic guidance to the agency and to consider act-related policy decisions. As a result, CIDA employees have conducted the following consultations, meetings and reviews to ensure that future ODA disbursements are in accordance with the act:

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(i) Reviewed strategic documents to ensure that the requirements of the act were reflected in key policy and programming documents. Key documents include: the department performance report, the report on plans and priorities, country development programming frameworks, and thematic strategies.

(ii) Developed a consultation directive to provide formal direction to CIDA employees. The development and revisions of the directive involved considerable internal consultations and meetings.

(iii) Held two interdepartmental meetings with other government departments impacted by the act. The purpose of the meetings was to provide an overview of the ODA AA, discuss the requirements under the act, and set key milestones for the process. The meetings were followed by continued support by CIDA to OGDs on the implementation of the act.

(iv) Increase consultations in the field by CIDA staff serving in countries abroad with local civil society, government, industry, businesses and community leadership.

Over the next few months and into the fall, the agency will engage partners and stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, the private sector and academia, in support of the development of strategies for CIDA's thematic priorities. These consultations are intended to improve the agency's knowledge and to seek advice on possible future directions.

In response to (b), the act states that international assistance can be reported as ODA if the competent minister is of the opinion that it: contributes to poverty reduction; takes into account the perspectives of the poor; and is consistent with international human rights standards. Given that the CIDA mandate is to reduce poverty, the act is already fully integrated into CIDA's current CIDA programming.

The act also requires that CIDA prepare two annual reports on the Government of Canada's official development assistance activities: a summary report and a statistical report. CIDA will submit the first Government of Canada summary report to Parliament on ODA activities in September 2009. The first statistical report will be published in March 2010. At that point, CIDA will be able to provide a more accurate breakdown of the percentage of Canada's ODA expenditures.

In response to (c), progress has been made and CIDA is currently in compliance with the act. CIDA is reviewing its strategic documents to ensure that the requirements of the act are reflected in key policy and programming documents. The agency is taking measures to ensure that CIDA employees are aware of the requirements under the act through a consultation directive and to continue dialogue on the reporting requirement (i.e. the summary and statistical reports). CIDA is also providing guidance to other government department's reporting obligations under the act, in a whole-of-government approach.

**Question No. 384—Hon. John McKay:**

What is the current funding allocation to the Service Canada Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program at the Willow Park location in Scarborough, Ontario and will the funding for the program continue, if funding for the LINC program changes, what is the reason for the change and if funding will not continue, why will it not continue?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Scarborough Willow Park Jr. Public School has provided language instruction for newcomers to Canada, LINC, training services under a contribution agreement between Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CIC, and the Toronto District School Board, TDSB.

Through this agreement, since 2007, just over \$550,000 has been provided for services at Scarborough Willow Park Jr. Public School.

CIC and the TDSB are currently negotiating a new contribution agreement for LINC and associated services to be delivered by the TDSB. Allocations to the various TDSB sites will be determined by the TDSB, in consultation with CIC, on the basis of local needs

**Question No. 385—Hon. John McKay:**

With regard to the Minister of Finance's current budgetary deficit projection for fiscal year 2009-2010 of more than \$50 billion, in light of current expenditures and revenue projections, does the Minister of Finance expect an increase in current deficit projections and, if so, by how much?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the June 2009 second report to Canadians on Canada's economic action plan provided an update to the fiscal forecast for 2008-09 and 2009-10. The report is available online at <http://www.fin.gc.ca/pub/report-rapport/2009-2/index-eng.asp>. Canadians can follow progress on the government's website for the economic action plan at [www.actionplan.gc.ca](http://www.actionplan.gc.ca). As outlined on page 218 of that document, based on economic and fiscal developments since budget 2009, the deficit has been revised up by \$2.9 billion for 2008-09 and \$8.1 billion for 2009-10. This deterioration reflects, in part, the impact of automatic stabilizers, such as EI, which provide support to the economy by automatically raising spending and lowering tax collections as the economy slows. In addition, loans to the auto industry and the Canada health transfer top-up increased the deficit projection by \$8.5 billion in 2009-10, so that the total projected deficit is \$3.9 billion for 2008-09 and \$50.2 billion for 2009-10.

The Fiscal Monitor, the most recent of which was released July 24, 2009, provides monthly highlights and details of the government's fiscal performance. For the first two months of the fiscal year, there was a budgetary deficit of \$7.5 billion.

**Question No. 387—Hon. Scott Brison:**

With regards to government advertising: (a) how much money has the government spent on newspaper and magazine advertising to provide information to the public about government programs, services, or initiatives, since January 1, 2006, giving particulars of (i) how much has been spent by each department or agency of government, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the newspaper or magazine in which each ad was published, (iv) the name and publication location; and (b) what are the dates of the newspaper or magazine issues in which the advertisements were published?

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**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the information requested in question No. 387 is too voluminous and costly to produce. The data required to adequately respond to the question is contained on 2,232 pages, in English only. Furthermore, given the magnitude of this question, it is not practical or cost effective for the government to translate these documents.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-eng.html>

**Question No. 395—Ms. Siobhan Coady:**

With regards to government advertising, how much money has the government spent on television and radio advertising since January 1, 2006, giving particulars of (i) how much has been spent by each department or agency of government, (ii) the subject and nature of each advertisement, (iii) the broadcast outlet on which each ad was broadcast, giving the name and location of the station, (iv) the dates on which the advertisements aired?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the information requested in question No. 395 is too voluminous and costly to produce. The data required to adequately respond to the question is contained on 27,170 pages, in English only. Furthermore, given the magnitude of this question, it is not practical or cost effective for the government to translate these documents.

The Government of Canada produces an advertising annual report which provides information on the process used to manage government advertising, annual expenditures, and the major campaigns undertaken to support government priorities.

These annual reports are available at the following link: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/pub-adv/annuel-annual-eng.html>.

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[English]

#### QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 173, 175, 176, 178, 179, 181, 184, 185, 187 to 189, 191 to 195, 197 to 203, 206 to 209, 211, 213 to 215, 217 to 219, 221 to 225, 229, 232 to 237, 239 to 241, 243 to 246, 248 to 252, 254, 256, 257, 259, 261 to 265, 267 to 271, 274 to 276, 278, 280, 282 to 293, 295, 297 to 301, 303, 304, 306, 307, 309, 311, 316, 318 to 321, 325, 330 to 336, 338 to 341, 345, 347, 349, 351, 352, 354 to 359, 361, 362, 367 to 369, 372, 374 to 377, 379, 380, 381, 386, 388 to 394 and 396 to 399, and Starred Question No. 363 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[English]

**Question No. 173—Mr. Tony Martin:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Sault Ste. Marie, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 175—Mr. Bruce Hyer:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Thunder Bay—Superior North, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 176—Ms. Megan Leslie:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Halifax, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 178—Mr. Bruce Hyer:**

With respect to the 28 federal departments that spent more than \$15 million to purchase and provide single-use water bottles and water coolers between the 2003-2004 and 2007-2008 fiscal years: (a) what was the total government expenditures for bottled water contracts in facilities where access to safe drinking water was readily available; and (b) with respect to the above figures, how much was spent by each of the 28 departments?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 179—Mr. Jim Maloway:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Elmwood—Transcona, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 181—Mr. Bill Siksay:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Burnaby—Douglas, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 184—Hon. Jack Layton:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Toronto—Danforth, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 185—Mr. Wayne Marston:**

With regards to the Public Sector Pension Investment Board: (a) what are the private market benchmarks used by the Board and in what way do they reflect the underlying credit risk, liquidity risk, leverage and beta of the underlying investments; (b) does the Board invest in hedge funds and, if so, (i) what are the Board's benchmarks for these hedge funds, (ii) how do the benchmarks accurately reflect the underlying credit risk, liquidity risk, leverage and beta of the underlying investments; (c) who is the officer responsible for the policy portfolio; (d) what is the total active risk the board is allowed to take and how is this risk monitored; (e) what is the risk management policy to deal with portfolios that are losing money; (f) are there steps to cut losses in public markets when they reach a certain level, and how are they made clear; (g) what are the detailed policies for (i) mitigating the risks of private markets, (ii) whistleblower protection, (iii) compliance with diversity laws; (h) what has been the turnover in funds of the last four fiscal years; and (j) has the board been audited or evaluated by the Canadian Human Rights Commission?

*Routine Proceedings*

(Return tabled)

Question No. 187—**Mr. Wayne Marston:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 188—**Mr. Yvon Godin:**

What is the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 2006 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Acadie—Bathurst, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 189—**Mr. Yvon Godin:**

With respect to federal investments in infrastructure in New Brunswick since 1999: (a) what is the detailed breakdown of the funding allocated for rebuilding roads in New Brunswick; and (b) what is the detailed breakdown of the funding allocated for airport infrastructures?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 191—**Ms. Megan Leslie:**

With respect to the Wage Earner Protection Program, on a yearly basis: (a) what funds have been allocated to this program; (b) what funds have been disbursed since its inception; (c) how many employees, by province, have benefited, (i) what was the average payment sought by claimants, (ii) what was the average payment received; (d) from which businesses did employees seek to claim back wages, vacation, severance and termination pay they were owed by their former employers, on what dates did each company declare bankruptcy or go into receivership under the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and how many employees did each company lay-off; (e) what is the average wait time between a person making a claim under the Wage Earner Protection Program, and them receiving payment; and (f) how many claims have been denied and what is the most common reason for a denial in claims?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 192—**Ms. Irene Mathysen:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of London—Fanshawe, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 193—**Hon. Jack Layton:**

With respect to the motion passed by the House on March 10, 2009 concerning Employment Insurance, what actions has the government taken since to: (a) eliminate the two-week waiting period; (b) reduce the qualifying period to a minimum of 360 hours of work, regardless of the regional rate of unemployment; (c) allow self-employed workers to participate in the program; (d) raise the rate of benefits to 60% and base benefits on the best 12 weeks in the qualifying period; and (e) encourage training and re-training?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 194—**Hon. Jack Layton:**

With respect to the Employment Insurance program, and by Employment Insurance economic regions, how many applicants did not qualify for benefits because (i) they did not have the minimum qualifying hours of work, (ii) they were self-employed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 195—**Hon. Jack Layton:**

With respect to the Employment Insurance program, and by Employment Insurance economic regions: (a) how many recipients have exhausted their regular benefits since October 31, 2008; (b) what is the government's estimate of how many

recipients will exhaust their regular benefits in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011; and (c) what assistance and guidance is the government offering or is prepared to offer to recipients who have exhausted their regular benefits?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 197—**Mr. John Rafferty:**

With respect to the Fall 2008 purchase by the government of \$150 billion in mortgage securities from Canadian banks through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC): (a) what conditions were sought and received from the banks by the government in return for extending this credit swap, and what conditions, if any, were sought by the government but rejected by the banks; (b) were any conditionalities sought on executive compensation; (c) did the federal government seek assurances of interest rate cuts or greater credit access by consumers and companies in return for the credit swap and, if not, why not; (d) what oversight measures are in place to monitor how the banks use the credit; (e) how was the \$150 billion sum disbursed, (i) which banks or financial institutions accessed funds, (ii) on what dates, (iii) in what amounts; (f) what was the presumed economic stimulus of this bailout; (g) how long does the government anticipate holding these mortgages and what is the anticipated return from this credit swap; and (h) in the event of a mortgagee defaulting on their loan, what are the financial liabilities and responsibilities borne by the government?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 198—**Mr. John Rafferty:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Thunder Bay—Rainy River, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 199—**Mr. John Rafferty:**

With respect to government funding announcements since the January 2009 Budget: (a) how many such announcements have been made; (b) what was the location, purpose, and amount of each announcement and which Ministers and Members of Parliament were in attendance; (c) what did each announcement cost to stage, including all travel and hospitality expenses incurred for each Minister, MP, and their staff to attend the announcement; (d) did any involve previously announced funds and, if so, which ones and in what amount; and (e) for each announcement, what amount has since been transferred to each recipient, on what date were each transfer made and if such funds have yet to be transferred, what factors account for the delay?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 200—**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Sudbury, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 201—**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:**

With respect to the redecorating and renovations of Ministers' parliamentary and departmental offices in the National Capital Region for the last five years: (a) what amount has each department spent on such improvements, on an annual basis; (b) on which date was each project approved and completed; (c) what was the nature of the renovations undertaken in each instance; (d) what is the normal approval process for such work; (e) which projects were undertaken at the demand of a Minister or their political exempt staff; (f) when were they undertaken and at what cost; (g) how much has been spent on buying or renting art work for each Ministers' office, on an annual basis; (h) what art work was purchased, when, and for how much; (i) how much has been spent on flowers or plants for each Minister's office, on an annual basis; (j) how much has been spent on new furniture for each Minister's office, on an annual basis; (k) what furniture was purchased, when, and for how much; (l) how much has each Minister spent on purchasing new technology for their office, on an annual basis; and (m) what new technology items were purchased, when, and for how much?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 202—Mr. Glenn Thibeault:**

With respect to the purchase, either by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) for departments, agencies and Crown corporations, or by the individual departments, agencies and Crown corporations, in the fiscal years 2007-2008, and 2008-2009, namely, (i) media and public relations training, (ii) public opinion research, (iii) promotional materials related to press conferences only, (iv) hairstylists and estheticians, (v) spas and suntanning salons, (vi) sporting events, (vii) dry cleaning, (viii) taxis, (ix) retreats at resorts or conference centres: (a) by department, agency or Crown corporation, how many items or services in each category were purchased; (b) what was the total cost spent by either PWGSC or another department, agency or Crown corporation on each category; and (c) with respect to media training, what was the date and cost of each contract and who was the recipient of the training?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 203—Mr. Glenn Thibeault:**

With respect to the following categories of items purchased either by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) for departments, agencies and Crown corporations, or by the individual department, agency or Crown corporation in fiscal years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, namely, (i) hybrid vehicles, (ii) televisions, (iii) flowers, (iv) carbon off-set credits for air travel, (v) blackberries, (vi) tickets to sporting events, (vii) tickets to culture related galas, (viii) tickets to entertainment events, (ix) golf balls and golf tees, (x) business ties, (xi) candies, (xii) alcoholic beverages, (xiii) flags, (xiv) land mines and cluster bombs, (xv) games, toys and wheeled goods, (xvi) DVDs and CDs, (xvii) perfumes, toilet preparations and powders, (xviii) clothes and footwear for Ministers of the crown and their staff, (xiv) sporting goods, (xx) Tim Horton's coupons, (xxi) plane and helicopter rentals: (a) by department, agency or Crown corporation, how many in each category were purchased; (b) what was the total cost spent by either PWGSC or another department, agency or Crown corporation on each category?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 206—Mr. Malcolm Allen:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2005-2006 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of British Columbia Southern Interior, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 207—Mr. Don Davies:**

With respect to Employment Insurance claims made by residents of the constituency of Vancouver Kingsway: (a) what is the number of claims that have been made since January 2008, (i) broken down by month, (ii) in total; (b) what is the percentage of claims that have been approved since January 2008, (i) broken down by month, (ii) in total; and (c) what has been the average period of time it has taken to process the claims that have been made since January 2008, (i) broken down by month, (ii) in total?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 208—Mr. Don Davies:**

With respect to the Canada Summer Jobs program administered by Service Canada: (a) what was the amount of funding allocated to each federal riding (i) for 2009, (ii) for 2008, (iii) for 2007; and (b) what are the criteria used to determine the funding amount for each riding?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 209—Mr. Don Davies:**

With respect to applications to sponsor family members for visitor visas made by residents of the constituency of Vancouver Kingsway: (a) what is the average processing time for applications made to sponsor family members from (i) China, (ii) the Philippines, (iii) India, (iv) all countries aggregated; (b) what is the approval rate for applications made to sponsor family member from (i) China, (ii) the Philippines, (iii) India, (iv) all countries aggregated; and (c) what are the top five main grounds for denying claims and their rates of usage for applications made to sponsor family members from (i) China, (ii) the Philippines, (iii) India, (iv) all countries aggregated?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 211—Ms. Linda Duncan:**

What is the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 1998-1999 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituencies of Edmonton-Mill Woods—Beaumont, Edmonton Centre, Edmonton East, Edmonton-Leduc, Edmonton-St. Albert, Edmonton-Sherwood Park, Edmonton-Spruce Grove, and Edmonton Strathcona, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 213—Ms. Linda Duncan:**

Regarding the government's "Turning the Corner" strategy released on April 26, 2007: (a) what progress has the government made on the development of regulations to cut greenhouse gas emissions; (b) what studies, analyses, polling, or modelling has the government commissioned or prepared on the development of greenhouse gas regulations, (i) who conducted the aforementioned studies, analyses, polling or modelling, (ii) what did each of these cost, and when specifically were they conducted; and (c) when, specifically, is the government going to issue its regulations on greenhouse gas emissions?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 214—Ms. Linda Duncan:**

Regarding Canada-United States discussions on energy security and climate change: (a) what specific issues have been discussed by Canadian and United States government representatives bilaterally on energy security issues since 2004; (b) what policy documents have been commissioned by or prepared for the Canadian government to support those discussions; (c) has the Canadian government begun to develop a domestic energy security plan and, if not, why not, and if so, when will it be completed; (d) has the Canadian government conducted an analysis of the effects of a disruption of oil supplies on Canada; (e) have there been discussions with the United States government or its representatives on the development a bilateral energy security plan with the United States government or have there been discussions of a continental energy security plan to include the parties to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); and (f) has the Canadian government done any analyses or studies on the vulnerability of Canada as the only NAFTA party without an energy security plan in the event of a disruption in oil supplies and, if not, why not, if so, (i) who conducted the studies, (ii) when were they commissioned and completed, (iii) what did they cost, (iv) what are their titles?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 215—Ms. Niki Ashton:**

With respect to acknowledging and addressing the link between youth unemployment and youth homelessness, using the age range of 15-24: (a) what is the youth unemployment rate over the past three years, broken down by month and by province; (b) what was the impact of the 2006 Human Resources Development Canada investment in youth employment; (c) how much money does the government plan to invest in 2009-2010 to address the problem of youth unemployment; (d) how many additional homeless youth will be caused by the increase in youth unemployment; (e) what is the youth homelessness rate over the past three years, broken down by month and by province; (f) how much money the effects of youth homelessness cost the government in 2009-2010; (g) how much money will the government invest in 2009-2010 to address the problem of homeless youth; and (h) what is the government's position on committing additional funds for youth internships and work study programs?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 217—Ms. Niki Ashton:**

What is the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Churchill, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 218—Ms. Niki Ashton:**

With respect to educational grants and awards issued by the government for the last five years: (a) how many grants have been awarded annually; (b) what was the average amount awarded to each grant recipient from (i) Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), (ii) Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), (iii) Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC); (c) what is the gender split for awardees from (i) NSERC, (ii) CIHR, (iii) SSHRC; (d) what is the provincial breakdown for funding awarded by (i) NSERC, (ii) CIHR, (iii) SSHRC; (e) how many NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC grants are anticipated to be awarded in the next three years, on an annual basis and what is the estimated average value of these awards, on an annual basis; and (f) with regards to changes in SSHRC funding announced in Budget 2009, what was the rationale behind orienting funding toward business-related degrees or areas of study?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 219—Ms. Libby Davies:**

What is the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 2006-2007 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Vancouver East, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 221—Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With respect to contract number C1111-050673/001/PR and Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC): (a) when was this contract first awarded, by whom and to whom was it awarded; (b) in what amount was it first awarded; (c) for what product or service was it first awarded; (d) for what reasons was the contract amended six times between December 2006 and February 2009; (e) what amendments were made in each amendment; (f) was the contract competitively tendered following Glickman Fulleringer Executive Promotions' withdrawal from the contract; (g) if it wasn't amended, why wasn't it amended; (h) was any penalty paid by Glickman Fulleringer for pulling out of the contract and, if so, what was the penalty, if the penalty was financial, in what amount was it and was the penalty paid; (i) on what date did Glickman Fulleringer advise the government of their intention to withdraw from the contract and what was the reasoning behind this decision; (j) on what date did 6768997 Canada Inc. assume control of the contract in question; (k) how was 6768997 Canada Inc. chosen by PWGSC; (l) who in PWGSC made the decision to award the contract to 6768997 Canada Inc.; (m) did any persons at 6768997 Canada Inc. formerly work at Glickman Fulleringer and, if so, whom and what role did the presence of this person play in the PWGSC decision to award the original contract to 6768997 Canada Inc.; and (n) what is the government's position on awarding a contract for the production of maple leaf flag pins that are distributed by parliamentarians to an American-owned company that subsequently outsourced the job to China?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 222—Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With respect to the Office of Protocol Official Events (XDS) and Official Visits (XDV) at the Department of Foreign Affairs, for the last five years: (a) what is the annual cost of travel, hospitality and any miscellaneous expenses incurred by each, on a monthly basis; (b) what amount was incurred hosting official delegations in Canada, on a monthly basis, what amount was incurred for foreign travel by Canadian officials, on a monthly basis and on what date and to what locations did each trip occur, stating the purpose of each trip; (c) in regard to such expenses incurred by Ministers of the Crown, their political staff, and any accompanying family members, what did each trip cost and on what date and to what locations did each trip occur stating the purpose of each trip; (d) in regard to special envoys and members of expert panels named by the Prime Minister, what expenses were incurred by each, on what date and to what locations did each trip occur, stating the purpose of each trip; (e) what expenses were covered for domestic travel by Canadian officials, whose expenses were covered, on what date and to what locations did each trip occur, stating the purpose of each trip; (f) in regard to hosting foreign delegations, which delegations were hosted, on what dates and what travel, hospitality and miscellaneous costs were incurred by each delegation; (g) why are expenses of Ministers, their staff and other VIPs, routed through XDS or XDV and not listed in proactive disclosures required in Treasury Board guidelines; and (h) what is the government's position on listing travel and hospitality expenses incurred by ministers and their staff on foreign trips in their proactive disclosures?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 223—Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:**

What is the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 1998-1999 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Winnipeg North, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 224—Mrs. Michelle Simson:**

With respect to federal spending in the constituency of Scarborough Southwest, what was the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 2005-2006 up to and including the current fiscal year, itemized according to: (a) the date the money was received in the riding; (b) the dollar amount of the expenditure; (c) the program from which the funding came; (d) the ministry responsible; and (e) the designated recipient?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 225—Mrs. Michelle Simson:**

With regard to the patient wait time pilot project announced in Budget 2007, what is the total amount of government funding since 2007 up to and including the current fiscal year, itemized according to: (a) where each pilot project is located; (b) the name of the institution; (c) what the money was used for; (d) the date the money was received; and (e) the effect on, if any, wait times?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 229—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:**

With regard to the Atlantic Gateway initiative: (a) how much federal funding has been announced to date; (b) how many funding expenditures have been approved to date under this program, (i) what is the federal contribution, and matching contribution from provincial or private partner sources for each expenditure for a total project cost, (ii) where is each expenditure located, (iii) what are the criteria for the approval and anticipated outcomes of each expenditure; (d) what are the amounts given to each province since the creation of this funding; and (e) what are the projected economic benefits for the Atlantic Region?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 232—Mrs. Michelle Simson:**

With regards to the expedited processing of family class sponsorships for people in Sri Lanka: (a) what date was the High Commission in Colombo instructed to expedite family class sponsorships; (b) what additional resources have been allocated to the High Commission to facilitate the expedited processing of family class sponsorships; (c) what criteria are used to identify the cases to be expedited; (d) how many cases have been identified for expedited processing; (e) how many applications have been completed since the instructions were issued; and (f) does the government have a comprehensive and detailed plan to send human resources directly to the camps in Sri Lanka in order to facilitate the completion of the documentation required to expedite family reunification for those who cannot make their way to Colombo?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 233—Mr. Luc Desnoyers:**

With respect to military contracts of over \$100 million awarded since January 2006 that include industrial and regional benefit (IRB) requirements, for each contract: (a) what is the name of the principal contractor; (b) what is the name of the Canadian company that concluded a partnership agreement with the principal contractor under the IRB Policy; (c) briefly, what is the project's description; (d) where will most of the project be carried out; (e) how long will the project take; and (f) what is the project's IRB value in terms of the IRB Policy?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 234—Hon. Marlene Jennings:**

With regards to the government's animal welfare policies: (a) to which projects, programs and organizations has funding been allocated; (b) what is the amount pledged for each project, program and organization; (c) what total amounts have been allocated towards animal welfare in the last 4 fiscal years, and what proportion was directed to regulatory enforcement or to other kinds of programs; (d) what relevant government regulations have existed and currently exist now; (e) has the government (or its agencies and departments) conducted consultations on animal welfare issues since January 23, 2006 and, if so, which groups have been consulted; (f) what mechanisms does Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency use to obtain input from valid animal welfare groups on animal welfare issues; (g) what amount has the government allocated to the National Farm Animal Care Council for this fiscal year and the last 4 fiscal years; (h) what amount has the government allocated to the Canadian Council on Animal Care for this fiscal year and the last 4 fiscal years; (i) what amount of the \$1.3 billion allocated to the government's Growing Forward program is dedicated exclusively to animal care and animal welfare; (j) what sections of the Growing Forward framework will allow for ongoing funding of animal welfare programs and enforcement in Canada; and (k) within Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, what departments address animal welfare issues?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 235—Hon. Marlene Jennings:**

With regards to the Canadian airports and night flights: (a) how many Canadian airports are designated as international airports, and what are their names; (b) by month, over the last 5 years, what is the number of flights that, between 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. and between midnight and 6:00 a.m., (i) take off, (ii) land, (iii) weigh more than 45,000 kilograms, (iv) weigh less, (v) are regularly scheduled flights, (vi) are charter flights, (vii) are caused by weather delays, (viii) are for emergency medical reasons, (ix) are for military operations, (x) are for delays beyond a carrier's control; (c) for each of Canada's international airports, what is the specific legal or regulatory requirement for public consultation concerning the creation of new flight corridors or the modification of existing ones; (d) which organizations are the relevant airport governing bodies required to consult with before the creation of a new flight corridor or the modification of an existing one; and (e) what legal or regulatory requirements exist, if any, that oblige Canada's international airports' governing bodies to take into account public health factors when modifying or establishing flight corridors or increasing the number of night flights?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 236—Hon. Marlene Jennings:**

What is the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 1998-1999 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 237—Mr. Pierre Paquette:**

Regarding the telecommunications infrastructure in each of Lanaudière's regional county municipalities: (a) what licences have been issued with respect to physical infrastructure in these jurisdictions; (b) who holds each of these licences; (c) what is the physical telecommunications infrastructure (cable, copper wire, optical fibre and other networks) inventory in these jurisdictions; and (d) who, specifically, owns this infrastructure?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 239—Ms. Siobhan Coady:**

With regard to government funding for research and development activity: (a) what research and development projects have received federal funds in Newfoundland and Labrador in the past fiscal year; (b) how many of these projects have required matching provincial, municipal, or private funding and what is the breakdown of funding matched for each project; (c) how much federal research and development funding has gone into each province and territory on a per capita basis; (d) as a percentage of the gross domestic product, how much federal funding has gone into research and development funding in each province and territory; (e) what reports have been prepared to analyze or make suggestions related to strategies for increasing research and development activities in the Atlantic Region, and what are the contents of these reports; and (f) what reports have been prepared to analyze or

make suggestions related to strategies for increasing research and development activities in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and what are the contents of these reports?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 240—Ms. Siobhan Coady:**

With regards to the boundary dispute between France and Canada related to the seabed off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador near the islands of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon: (a) what actions has the government taken in relation to this dispute; (b) what correspondence has been exchanged between Canada and France on this issue, and what are the contents of this correspondence; (c) what correspondence has been exchanged between the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador on this issue, and what are the contents of this correspondence; and (d) have any reports been prepared on this issue for the government, and what are the contents of these reports?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 241—Ms. Siobhan Coady:**

With regards to the support of the sealing industry in Canada: (a) what actions have been taken by the government to correct misinformation being spread concerning the seal harvest by animal rights extremists; (b) what correspondence has been exchanged by the Government of Canada and other governments related to the seal industry, and what is the contents of this correspondence; (c) have any reports or briefing notes been prepared on this issue and, if so, what are the contents of these reports; and (d) how much has the government spent in marketing and advertising in support of the seal industry in 2007-2008 and in 2008-2009?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 243—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:**

With regard to the Veteran's Independence Program: (a) how many applications were received in the years 2007, 2008, and 2009 to date; (b) how many of these applications were approved to receive assistance; (c) how many of these applications were refused; (d) does the government plan to expand the program to include all Second World War and Korean War veterans' widows; and (e) has the Department of Veteran's Affairs been provided any documents or departmental briefing notes with regard to a cost-benefit analysis for expanding the program?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 244—Mr. Anthony Rota:**

With respect to the \$ 1 billion Community Adjustment Fund announced in Budget 2009: (a) what economic studies were conducted by the government with respect to the creation of the Community Adjustment Fund; (b) when did these studies begin; (c) which stakeholders, organizations, provincial governments and municipal governments were consulted; (d) have any rural groups, organizations, stakeholders been consulted in terms of scope or mandate of this new Fund; (e) have any Aboriginal communities been consulted; (f) what is the planned date for the implementation and distribution of funds for the first year of the Fund; (g) what is the base amount each province will receive; (h) will the territories receive funding from the Fund and, (i) if so, what is the base amount they will receive, (ii) if not, will they receive funding through a different program; (j) which annual population figure will be used for the calculation of the per capita sharing for the remainder of the funds which are to be allocated in annual payments in each of the two years to the provinces; (k) what amount, excluding the base amount, is to be allocated to Ontario based on the calculation of the per capita sharing for the first year; (l) as the funding will be provided through regional development agencies, what amount will be provided to FedNor; (m) what federal ridings will be under the jurisdiction of FedNor regarding the Community Adjustment Fund; (n) what limitations, stipulations or regulations will be attached to the requirements for the provinces to receive and distribute the funds; (o) what, if any, are the specific programs the Fund have already committed to support and in which town or cities are these programs based; and (p) what specific programs will the Fund invest that will help workers, communities and businesses in Northern Ontario position themselves to take advantage of opportunities, as economic growth recovers in Canada and around the world?

(Return tabled)



*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 245—Mr. Anthony Rota:**

With respect to federal spending in the constituency of Nipissing—Timiskaming, what was the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 2005-2006 up to and including the current fiscal year, itemized according to: (a) the date the money was received in the riding; (b) the dollar amount of the expenditure; (c) the program from which the funding came; (d) the ministry responsible; and (e) the designated recipient?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 246—Mr. Anthony Rota:**

With regard to funding applications submitted to FedNor, the Federal Economic Development Initiative in Northern Ontario, for each fiscal year from 2003-2004 to 2009-2010: (a) which projects were submitted under each agency program; (b) which projects were approved; (c) what amount was allocated to each of these projects; and (d) which projects were not processed?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 248—Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:**

What is the government's strategy to counter the important increase in illegal cigarette sales?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 249—Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:**

What is the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Don Valley East, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 250—Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:**

What is the total impact on government revenues due to the 2006 new tax on income trusts?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 251—Hon. Mark Eyking:**

What are the names of all government appointments to federal boards, agencies and associations in Nova Scotia for the years 2006 to date?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 252—Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to project applications and approvals in the constituency of Avalon under the Job Creation Partnership, through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada: (a) how many applications were submitted; (b) who were the applicants; (c) what were the projects identified in the application; and (d) of the projects that were approved, how much funding was approved and what was the breakdown of funding to each specific project for wages, overhead and materials for the time period January 1, 2007 to April 30, 2009?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 254—Mr. Robert Oliphant:**

What is the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 2006-2007 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Don Valley West, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 256—Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:**

With respect to the Community Futures program, what Community Futures projects have received funding, since 2006, within British Columbia, but outside the Greater Vancouver area and, for these projects, which have repaid any loans they received?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 257—Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:**

With respect to the Building Canada Fund, which applications have received funding since 2006 within British Columbia, but outside the Greater Vancouver area?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 259—Hon. Maria Minna:**

With regard to the government's public consultations to modernize Part III of the Canada Labour Code: (a) how many groups have made submissions; (b) how many individuals have made submissions; (c) how many face-to-face or telephone meetings has the Minister of Labour had with groups and individuals in relation to these public consultations; (d) what are the names of groups and individuals of (c); (e) what are the names of groups and individuals that have made submissions; (f) what is the budget of this public consultation process; (g) what is the cost so far of these consultations; and (h) is the legislation to modernize Part III of the Canada Labour Code being drafted?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 261—Hon. Maria Minna:**

With regard to the Employment Equity Act: (a) has the progress of the Act been evaluated since the last parliamentary review of the legislation and, if so, what were the findings of this review; (b) did Human Resources and Social Development Canada develop a workplace equity integration strategy for persons with disabilities and Aboriginal peoples; (c) have these two under-represented groups in the public service increased in numbers; and (d) how has employment equity progressed in workplaces covered under the Federal Contractors Program since 2002?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 262—Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:**

With regard to government investments in drinking water filtration and sewage treatment infrastructure: (a) how much has the government spent or allocated for these in fiscal years 2005-2006 to 2009-2010 (budgeted amount); (b) what is the provincial-territorial breakdown of this spending in each of the aforementioned years; and (c) how much investment has this spending leveraged, or will leverage, from other levels of government, including provincial, territorial and municipal?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 263—Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:**

With regard to the environmental industries sector in Canada: (a) what were the sales of water and waste-water treatment firms for the five most recent years; (b) what proportion of these sales were for equipment and systems as opposed to services; (c) what were the sales for the environmental industries as a whole in the same years; (d) what proportion of the water sector's sales were export sales in each of the years in question; and (e) what proportion of these export sales were for equipment and systems as opposed to services?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 264—Ms. Chris Charlton:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the City of Hamilton, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 265—Ms. Chris Charlton:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Hamilton Mountain, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings*

**Question No. 267—Mr. Brian Masse:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Windsor West, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 268—Mr. Mark Holland:**

With regard to the Shiprider Project: (a) at what stage are the negotiations with the United States; (b) is there a deadline for the signing of the permanent agreement and, if so, what is it; (c) on what date did the discussions about this project begin and by whom were they initiated; (d) which Canadian government departments or agencies, and which officials have participated in the negotiations; (e) which United States government departments or agencies and officials have participated in the negotiations; (f) were other stakeholders consulted and, if so, who; (g) when did these consultations occur and what was discussed; (h) what is the mandate of this project; (i) what are the rules under which this project operates; (j) which government departments are funding this project, both here and in the United States; (k) what is the total dollar amount spent by the government on this project since its inception, broken down by year; (l) what is the total dollar amount spent on this project since its inception, broken down by year; (m) which government departments will operate and fund this project should it become permanent, both in Canada and the United States; (n) what is the total anticipated cost of this project should it become permanent; (o) how much of that anticipated cost is being covered by the Canadian government and how much will be covered by the American government; (p) how many Canadian vessels and how many American Coast Guard vessels are participating in this project currently; (q) how many Canadian vessels and how many American Coast Guard vessels will participate when and if this project becomes permanent; and (r) what precautions have been taken to ensure that Canadian sovereignty is not violated?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 269—Mr. Mark Holland:**

With regard to the ministerial directions provided to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS): (a) what are the new operational guidelines provided to CSIS; (b) when were they provided and when did they come into force; (c) how did they amend the previous CSIS guidelines; (d) why was a revision of the guidelines initiated and when was it initiated; (e) who was consulted in the revision of the guidelines and when; (f) do the new guidelines address the concerns raised about CSIS' operations and procedures in both the O'Connor and Iacobucci inquiries and how; (g) do the revised guidelines address the issue of information sharing, and how; (h) do the guidelines specifically address the issue of information sharing with countries that have questionable human rights records or are known to use torture, and how; (i) do the revised guidelines specifically address the issue of labelling, and how; (j) will there be a mandatory review of the revised guidelines to ensure that they have effectively responded to concerns raised by the O'Connor and Iacobucci inquiries, and if so, when; and (k) what are the government's intelligence priorities for 2008-2009, as outlined in the new guidelines, and what are the government's intelligence priorities for 2009-2010?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 270—Mr. Mark Holland:**

With respect to the government's policy of arming Canada's border guards; (a) how many border guards are currently armed, broken down by region and border crossing; (b) how many border guards still remain to be armed; (c) what is the government's current schedule for the training and arming of the remaining border guards, from the present until the scheduled date of completion; (d) has the schedule been amended and, if so, how, when and why; (e) what is methodology is being used to determine the order in which border guards are armed; (f) what is the current budgeted cost of arming border guards; (g) has this amount changed and, if so, why, when and by how much; (h) what is the detailed breakdown of money spent to implement this policy, broken down yearly, to date; (i) what is the total dollar amount budgeted for this project since its inception, broken down by year, from now until completion; (j) which department or agency is supplying the funds for the arming of border guards; (k) who did the government consult before initiating the arming policy, and when; (l) are these consultations on-going as this policy is rolled out and, if so, at what point do the consultations occur and how are they conducted; (m) was the government provided with advice or studies to support their claim that the arming of border guards will improve border security and, if so, by whom and how were their conclusions reached; (n) was the government provided with any advice or

studies that did not support their claim that the arming of border guards will improve border security and, if so, by whom and how were those conclusions reached; (o) was the government provided with advice or studies that recommended other policies as more effective at improving border security, and if so, by whom where they provided, what were they, how were their conclusions reached and, what were their detailed cost breakdown; (p) what is the government doing with border guards who do not wish to be trained to carry a gun or who do not have the competency to do so; (q) what is the detailed cost to the government, broken down annually, of accommodating those guards; (r) what is the current pay scale of an unarmed guard as compared to an armed guard; (s) how many times have armed border guards had to upholster their guns to date, how many times have they had to fire their gun, and what were the circumstances surrounding each situation; and (t) is the government considering extending the arming policy to include national park wardens and, if so, when will that occur and what is the detailed cost of this policy?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 271—Mr. Mark Holland:**

With respect to proposed provisions contained in bills C-2, C-14 and C-15: (a) has the government done a detailed cost analysis for these bills and, if so, please provide it; (b) what is the projected growth rate of inmates in our federal correctional institutions over the next five years, broken down yearly, and are costs associated with proposed provisions contained in these bills factored into that calculation; (c) what is the government's plan to ensure that our corrections facilities can accommodate the additional surge of inmates resulting from the changes that these bills would bring; (d) what funds have been spent on corrections infrastructure, annually, since 2006; (e) what funds are being allocated to address corrections infrastructure over the next five years, broken down annually; (f) what funds have been spent on programming for inmates in federal corrections institutions, broken down by program, annually, since 1993; (g) what funds are earmarked to be spent on programming for inmates in federal corrections institutions, broken down by program, annually, for the next five years? (h) did the government consult with the provincial and territorial governments before bringing forward these bills and, if so, (i) when did the consultations occur, (ii) what form did the consultations take; (i) will the government be providing funding to the provinces and territories to help them pay for the additional costs being placed on their correctional institutions and, if so how much, and when can they expect to access the funding; and (j) what are the government's plans for the land that is currently used by the Prison Farm Program, and will it be used to accommodate the growing number of inmates in our federal institutions and how?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 274—Mr. Charlie Angus:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Timmins—James Bay, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 275—Hon. Anita Neville:**

With regard to the Agency for Status of Women Action Plan: (a) what individuals, organizations and government bodies have been consulted; (b) what individuals, organizations and government bodies are still to be consulted for the development of the Action Plan; (c) what mediums are used for the consultations and are they written, in person, by video conference or any other mean; (d) is the Minister of State meeting with consultation participants in every province and territory; and (e) were there guidelines or criteria developed for consultation and, if so, what were they?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 276—Hon. Anita Neville:**

With regard to Military Resource Centres: (a) how many are there across Canada; (b) where are they located; (c) how many staff are employed in each centre; (d) what are the programs listed in each centre; (e) how many early learning and child care spaces are available in each centre; (f) how many children occupy those spaces; (g) how many children are on the wait list; and (h) what is the criteria to access spaces available?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 278—Ms. Jean Crowder:**

With regards to the proposed changes to the Food Mail Program: (a) how will the expenditures specifically be used to improve the program's efficiency; (b) how are the elimination of personal orders and the reduction of small retail orders expected to improve the program's effectiveness; (c) how will the elimination of personal orders and a reliance on large retailers impact those people with specific dietary and health needs; (d) how does the government plan on fulfilling its duties to consult with both Inuit women and men about the proposed changes to the program; (e) how does the government plan on publicizing the changes in services and the relocation of entry points to the affected population; (f) what are the plans for ensuring that the retailers will pass on the subsidy savings to consumer prices; and (g) how does the government intend to increase transparency within the program and monitor how government funds are specifically spent?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 280—Hon. Anita Neville:**

With regard to the \$18 million committed to the restoration of Lake Winnipeg: (a) how much of the committed amount has been spent; (b) what projects has the money been allocated to; (c) how much has each project received; (d) what organizations have received funding; (e) how much has each organization received; (f) what are the intended outcomes for all funding that has been allocated; (g) over what period of time are outcomes expected of each project; (h) has all the money been committed to; and (i) what government departments are overseeing the spending expenditures?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 282—Mr. Jack Harris:**

With respect to Canadian bilateral aid to Afghanistan, on an annual basis since 2002: (a) what projects have been so funded and in what amounts; (b) which branches of which departments, were involved in approving and overseeing each project; (c) how much is considered tied aid, in percentage and dollar amounts; (d) which projects were sole-sourced contracts; (e) which projects have been audited by independent auditors hired by, or on behalf of, the government; (f) which accounting firms were hired; (g) what was the cost, and submission date, of each audit; (h) by which department or agency was the audit received; (i) were any contracts awarded to auditors without a competitive tender and, if so, which ones, and why; (j) on the basis of what criteria do auditors determine a project to be satisfactory or unsatisfactory and which ones were so designated and why; (k) how many projects have had funding revoked, reduced, or not renewed, because of concerns related to their fiscal or project management and which were so affected, and for what reasons; and (l) which audits referenced projects that lost aid due to corruption, and what was the estimated loss in percentage and dollar amounts?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 283—Mr. Jack Harris:**

With respect to the deportation of foreign nationals from Canada, for the last five years: (a) on an annual basis, how many people are deported and to which countries; (b) how many were deported after having been deemed a national security threat, violated immigration rules, or received a criminal conviction; (c) how many countries does the government not deport people to due to concerns of violating the principle of non-refoulement, as codified in international law, including the 1951 Geneva Convention; (d) to which countries does Canada not deport people and why; (e) with regard to countries that have well documented human rights violations, what consideration is given to their records and their potential implications for deportees prior to Canadian government officials making final determinations on whether or not to deport persons, (i) which departments would be involved in such a consideration, (ii) which department is the final authority in making a determination; (f) on what basis would the need to deport a person trump concerns for that person's welfare after they are deported; (g) with regard to countries that are in the midst of a civil war, what consideration is given to this and its potential implications for a deportee prior to Canadian government officials making a final determination on whether or not to deport a person; (h) what is the annual travel costs of repatriating deportees, as a global figure and a median basis; (i) what is the annual cost of housing deportees in detention prior to their deportation; (j) what is the average time a deportee remains in custody prior to deportation; and (k) currently how many people are waiting to be deported?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 284—Mr. Jack Harris:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of St. John's East, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 285—Mr. Peter Julian:**

With respect to government expenditures since fiscal year 2004-2005: (a) what is the total amount of government funding from that time up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Burnaby—New Westminster; (b) which departments or agencies spent money within the constituency; (c) on what initiatives did each department or agency spend these funds; and (d) what was the amount of spending within the riding for each department or agency and each initiative?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 286—Mr. Bill Siksay:**

With respect to the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) for the last five years: (a) how many security incidents, by airport, were reported on a monthly basis; (b) what kind of security incidents were so reported; (c) how many incidents were serious enough to involve the police; (d) how many involved arrests; (e) how many weapons were confiscated by airport screeners, by airport, on a monthly basis; (f) what weapons were confiscated; (g) how many breaches of security perimeters under CATSA's jurisdiction occurred, by airport, on a monthly basis; (h) which private security firms has CATSA engaged to provide screening services at airports; (i) what is the value and duration of each contract; (j) which contracts were awarded without a competitive tender, and why; (k) how many employees of private security firms have been charged in relation to security incidents; and (l) on what day and in what location did the incidents occur?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 287—Mr. Bill Siksay:**

With respect to significant environmental incidents within federal jurisdiction in the last five years: (a) when and in what locations did each incident occur; (b) which incidents occurred in environmentally sensitive or protected areas; (c) what damage was caused; (d) which wildlife listed in the Species at Risk Registry were affected; (e) which departments were notified; (f) which department claimed lead jurisdiction in overseeing each case; (g) who evaluated the potential environmental damage; (h) which private sector entities were contracted to carry out such work; (i) were any contracts the subject of a non-competitive bid process and, if so, which ones and why; (j) what were the associated cleaning up costs of each incident; (k) who was so contracted; (l) were any contracts the subject of a non-competitive bid process and, if so, which ones and why; (m) what charges, if any, were laid in connection with each incident; (n) did any result in fines or prison terms and, if so, for whom and what sentence or fine did they receive; and (o) if no legal action was taken, why not?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 288—Mr. Bill Siksay:**

With respect to the \$2 billion for university and college infrastructure announced in Budget 2009: (a) what projects have been approved for funding to date; (b) where are they located; (c) who are the partners involved; (d) what is the federal contribution; (e) what is each partner's contribution; and (f) has the funding flowed?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 289—Mr. Marcel Proulx:**

With respect to Canada's contribution to millennium development goals (MDGs) and democratic governance: (a) how will the Canadian International Development Agency reach the target populations in each of the 20 new countries on the focus list, especially countries where the target populations are in the minority; (b) which subnational concentration strategies will be applied; (c) which MDGs will be targeted in each country selected; and (d) what percentage of bilateral aid for each country will go directly to achieving MDGs?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 290—Hon. Larry Bagnell:**

Since January 2006, what are the dates, times, and locations of all cabinet and all committees of cabinet meetings including: (a) who attended each meeting and in what capacity; (b) who attended as a presenter to cabinet or cabinet committee at each meeting, or as part of a delegation to cabinet or cabinet committee at each meeting; and (c) what was the time duration of the meeting?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 291—Ms. Jean Crowder:**

With regards to the proposed establishment of the Edmonton Aboriginal Transition Centre in conjunction with the proposed changes to the Aboriginal Transition Model in urban centres: (a) what specific research has the government done to recognize the need for this centre and what are the comprehensive findings of any studies done; (b) how does the government specifically plan on engaging and cooperating with community-based organizations that already focus on transitioning Aboriginal people in urban locations; (c) if any consultation was done with community-based organizations prior to the planning of the new model, (i) what organizations were contacted, (ii) at what date were they contacted, (iii) where is each organization located, (iv) what were the results and feedback of the consultation process; (d) has this new model received support or opposition from the Friendship Centres on the local, regional, and national levels; (e) if the Friendship Centres do support this new model, how is their cooperation demonstrated, and if they are opposed to the model, how have they displayed their opposition; and (f) what consultation has been done with other governmental departments, particularly the Department of Canadian Heritage, that fund similar services to Aboriginal peoples in order to avoid overlap in governmental expenditures and programming?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 292—Ms. Libby Davies:**

With regards to former President Bush's visit to Calgary, Alberta on March 17, 2009, and former Presidents Bush and Clinton's visit to Toronto, Ontario, on May 29, 2009: (a) what were the costs of these visits to the government; (b) what did these costs cover, including security, transportation or other; (c) what, if any, is the protocol or agreement for incurring costs for visits of former heads of state to Canada; (d) did the government contribute to the speakers' fees or any other fees related to the March or May events and, if so, what were the contributions; (e) what risk assessments are made and what risk factors are considered by the government when former heads of state visit Canada; (f) have any former heads of state been denied entry into Canada because of risk factors; and (g) does the government condone the exclusion of the media from these types of events, if the government is responsible for any of the costs related to these visits?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 293—Ms. Denise Savoie:**

With regards to the disposal of surplus federal property in the greater Victoria area: (a) how many federal properties have been designated as surplus properties since 1999; (b) for what reasons were the properties determined as surplus; (c) which properties have been designated as routine; (d) which properties have been designated as strategic; (e) when were those designations declared; (f) were any properties changed from a routine designation to a strategic designation and, if so, what was the reason for the change in designation, and when did the change in designation occur; (g) what was the market value for each of the surplus properties; (h) what was the purchase price of each disposal property that was successfully transferred; (i) who conducted the independent third party appraisals of each property; (j) which properties, if any, were transferred under the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI); (k) which properties, if any, are currently in the process of transfer through SFRPHI; and (l) how many homelessness related community service providers have tendered bids on disposal properties?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 295—Hon. John McCallum:**

With respect to the government's proposed tax on income trusts to take effect in 2011: (a) what is the government's current revenue forecast for 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 from the tax on income trusts; and (b) what portion of these monies will be shared with the provinces and territories, (i) how much money will each province receive, if any, as a result of the tax on income trusts in each year 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, (ii) has the government established a working group to determine how

this revenue would be shared, as requested by the Ontario Finance Minister in 2007, (iii) which provinces has Finance Canada consulted with to inform them of the monies they should expect from this tax, if any?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 297—Ms. Jean Crowder:**

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2004-2005 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Nanaimo—Cowichan, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 298—Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With respect to the Jericho Lands in Vancouver, British Columbia: (a) what are all of the documents outlining the government's plans for the Jericho Lands; (b) which department or agency is in charge of the transition from military use to other use; (c) what is the timeline for the relocation of the regimental headquarters; (d) where are the family housing units currently located on the premises planned to be relocated and by when; (e) which department or agency will take custody when the Jericho Lands are vacated; (f) what dates and locations, if at all, did consultations take place with the public and Musqueam bands regarding the planned change in land use; (g) what is the process by which the government will divest itself of the Jericho Lands; and (h) have any commitments been made to sell, lease or transfer all or part of the Jericho Lands to any other organizations and, if so, to whom?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 299—Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With respect to the University of British Columbia (UBC), for the fiscal years 2004 to present (and including Budget 2009): (a) which government departments, agencies, crown corporations and granting councils distributed research funding to UBC; (b) in what amounts were these funds distributed; and (c) for what projects or programs were these funds distributed?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 300—Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With respect to Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (organized crime and protection of justice system participants) and Bill C-15, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts: (a) does the government have an assessment of the increase in incarceration (both numbers and duration) that will result from the enactment of these Bills and, if so, what is it; (b) does the government have an assessment of the number of new provincial jail cells in British Columbia that will have to be constructed to house an increased prison population resulting from these Bills and, if so, what is it; (c) does the government have an assessment of the number of new federal prison cells that will have to be constructed to house an increased prison population resulting from these Bills and, if so, what is it; (d) does the government have an estimate on the cost to build the increased provincial and federal prison capacity to house the predicted increase in incarcerated Canadians; and (e) what are the estimated annual operating cost for the estimated increase in prisoner capacity?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 301—Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With respect to crime prevention programs in the province of British Columbia: (a) what crime prevention programs does the government fund, and what are the dates that they were created, (i) what is the budget of each program, (ii) how many spaces do they provide, (iii) who is the responsible authority for overseeing and managing these programs; (b) what crime prevention programs has the government cut funding for during the fiscal years 2004 to present and, in what amounts; (c) with respect to Budget 2009, what has been budgeted for each crime prevention program in British Columbia, (i) how many spaces will be provided, (ii) who is the responsible authority for overseeing and managing these programs; and (d) what crime prevention programs has the government cancelled during the fiscal years 2004 to present, (i) what was the cost of each program, (ii) how many spaces did they provide, (iii) who was the responsible authority for overseeing and managing these programs?

*Routine Proceedings*

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 303—Mr. Dennis Bevington:**

With respect to grants and contributions provided by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (1) contribution of \$8,691.00 to 5681 N.W.T. LTD. dated January 8, 2009, (2) contribution of \$95,000 to Braden Burry Expediting dated February 9, 2009, (3) contribution of \$41,000 to the NWT & Nunavut Chamber of Mines dated February 28, 2009, (4) contribution of \$63,000 to NWT Chamber of Commerce dated March 2, 2009): (a) what were these grants or contributions used for; (b) who authorized the disbursement of these funds; and (c) under which program was the funding provided under?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 304—Mr. Dennis Bevington:**

With respect to the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund announced in Budget 2009: (a) what projects have been approved for funding to date; (b) where are they located; (c) who are the partners involved; (d) what is the federal contribution; (e) what are each partner's contribution; and (f) has the funding flowed?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 306—Mr. Todd Russell:**

With regards to the seal fishery: (a) how much has the government spent on advertising to promote the Canadian position on the seal hunt; (b) in how many media outlets, broken down by (i) province or country, if outside Canada, (ii) medium, such as newspaper, radio, television, internet, or other; (c) which countries, international bodies, non-governmental organizations, and supranational bodies such as the European Union, have the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Ambassador for Fisheries Conservation met with to present Canada's position on the seal fishery; and (d) when and where did each of these meetings take place?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 307—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With regard to funding for pandemic response in the 2006-2007, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 fiscal years: (a) what is the detailed breakdown of the (i) total funding allocated, (ii) total funding spent; (b) what are the official criteria required to access the pandemic response funding; and (c) what funding amounts have been distributed, on what date and towards what project?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 309—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With regard to the current outbreak of new influenza A (H1N1) virus, including its potential global spread, and including the probability that it will become widely established: (a) seeing as swine is an important reservoir for the new virus, what specific measures are being undertaken by animal and human health experts in Canada to monitor swine; (b) what, if any, funding has been made available for a coordinated surveillance effort; (c) how does the new H1N1 compare with the 1918 H1N1 virus and H5N1, particularly regarding the adaptation markers and virulence, and are the current human cases of H1N1 similar (in pattern) to the possible cases of influenza between the spring and fall of 1918 and, if so, what lessons can be learnt; (d) what planning is being undertaken for a worse-case scenario, especially if a more virulent virus emerges during the course of a pandemic can never be ruled out; (e) what specific measures are being taken to reduce the spread of H1N1 in local communities (and particularly in low resource areas) and institutions, and in the future, at what point should affected provinces consider activating aggressive containment or mitigation efforts for affected communities; (f) what new surveillance is taking place in the southern hemisphere, particularly in respect to the Americas' flyways, humans, and pig populations; (g) has the source of H5N1 infection in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia been established and, if so, what is the source, and is it endemic; (h) what steps are being taken to address the source of H5N1 infections in the Fraser Valley, particularly with the approach of the Vancouver Olympic Games; (i) what specific preventive and treatment recommendations, if any, will be provided to young adults and pregnant women; (j) what are the predicted impacts on the Canadian economy and society should a pandemic occur if illnesses and deaths are concentrated in a young, economically productive age group, and what specific measures can be implemented to reduce these effects; (k) what underlying medical conditions may make individuals more at risk of complications or more likely to experience severe or lethal infections, and how will this information be related to at-

risk groups; (l) how might our current disease burden influence the impacts of a possible H1N1 pandemic, and how might these impacts be reduced; (m) what is the known full clinical spectrum of the disease caused by H1N1, does it impact multiple organs and, if so, which ones, what specific supportive therapies might be given, and will there be resources to provide these; (n) what specific steps have been taken to engage the private and voluntary sector in Canada, what percentage of organizations are prepared for the economic and social impacts of a possible pandemic, and what measures are being taken to better prepare these sectors; (o) what percentage of Canadian companies activated their pandemic response plans because of the H1N1 epidemic, and what are the learnings from these companies; (p) since the emergence of the H1N1 epidemic, what steps have been taken to evaluate the effectiveness of communications among all stakeholders, including the levels of public awareness, degree of concern, and complacency; (q) what, if any, steps could have been taken to contain the spread of H1N1 infection in Canada, and going forward, what is the decision framework to move from a policy of containment to mitigation; (r) what will be the decision process for deciding whether to produce and stock seasonal or new influenza A (H1N1) vaccines for Canada; (s) what specific measures will be taken to avoid complacency about the H1N1 virus and keep the public engaged; (t) what steps are being taken to monitor antiviral resistance in Canada, (i) what alternative therapies, including, new antiviral agents for flexibility in developing prophylaxis treatment, benefits of combination therapies and novel therapies, including, monoclonal antibodies, are being explored to deal with this possibility, (ii) what resources are being provided for these efforts, (iii) how will it be decided who has been exposed and requires treatment, (iv) how will antivirals be distributed in the event of a pandemic; (u) what specific funding is being provided for clinical vaccine studies for commercial-scale production of both antigen and adjuvant for a novel H1N1 influenza vaccine; (v) how quickly will influenza A (H1N1) vaccines be available, (i) what regulatory processes would need to be modified, (ii) what delays might occur in production, (iii) how could these be overcome; (w) will vaccines being developed now be effective if the virus causes a mild pandemic in the warmer months and changes into something more severe in the fall; (x) who specifically is likely to receive priority for vaccination with a future pandemic vaccine, and how can decision makers engage citizens regarding ethical choices in order that the public understand the decisions that will have to be made during a pandemic; (y) what advice is being given to medical personnel and community members regarding masks, (i) what is the Canadian stockpile of N-95 and surgical masks, (ii) could Canadian companies supply enough of the required masks for a serious outbreak, (iii) what is the Canadian supply of respirators and does it meet the needs of the government's estimate; and (z) what is the possibility of a wider clinical spectrum of H1N1, and a longer medical legacy (i.e. long-term sequelae)?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 311—Hon. John McCallum:**

With respect to non-financial assets and Crown Corporations owned by the government, how much value does the government ascribe to: (a) Via Rail; (b) the Canada Post Corporation; (c) the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation; (d) the CN Tower; (e) Canada House; (f) the National Arts Center; (g) the Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd; (h) the Royal Canadian Mint; (i) the Canadian Museum of Nature; (j) the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation; (k) the National Gallery of Canada; (l) the National Museum of Science and Technology Corporation; (m) the four ferry boats owned by Marine Atlantic; (n) its 55 prisons, treatment centres, and healing lodges; (o) the Canada Ports Corporation; and (p) the National Capital Commission?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 316—Mr. Pat Martin:**

With regards to the \$500 million for Recreational Infrastructure Canada-RInC: (a) how much of the original amount has been spent to date; (b) which projects have been funded and what is the (i) name, (ii) location, (iii) timeline, (iv) result of each project; (c) what is the expected spending of the fund by the end of this fiscal year; and (d) what are the partners for each project, and what have they contributed to each project?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings*

**Question No. 318—Mr. Nathan Cullen:**

With respect to the \$1.7 billion invested in Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) over the last three years: (a) on what date, in what amount, and for what purposes, were the disbursements made; (b) what amount was earmarked specifically for repairs to the Chalk River reactor, (i) what repairs have been made, on what date, and at what cost, (ii) what repairs remain to be addressed, (iii) what is the estimated cost of fixing the reactor's remaining deficiencies, (iv) what work plan is in effect to correct them; (c) what amount went to executive compensations, including performance bonuses, and which executives received such compensation, and in what amount; (d) what amount was spent on private sector consultants, (i) which consultants were so hired, and for what services, (ii) which contracts were the subject of a non competitive, or sole-source, bid process; (e) what amount was spent to assess future considerations to privatize AECL, (i) if private sector actors were involved, which ones, (ii) what services did they render, and at what cost; (f) what is the business case to privatize AECL, in whole or part; and (g) what amount was spent on assessing the market value of AECL, in whole or part, (i) what evaluations were given, on what date, (ii) who undertook the evaluations on AECL's behalf?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 319—Mr. Nathan Cullen:**

With respect to performance bonuses paid by the government on an annual basis for the last four years: (a) which departments or Crown entities awarded such bonuses, to whom, in what amounts and on what dates; (b) who is eligible to receive such compensation, and what formula is used to determine the bonus; and (c) what is the government's position on maintaining such bonuses?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 320—Mr. Nathan Cullen:**

With respect to sole-source contracting over the last five years undertaken by, or on behalf of, each department or Crown agency: (a) what was the total amount of such contracting, on an annual basis; (b) what was the amount and duration of each contract, (i) who so authorized the contracts, (ii) which contracts were amended, (iii) how were they amended, and what justification was given for amending each contract; (c) in each instance where the value of the contract exceeded \$25,000, what was the business case for doing so; and (d) what audits were undertaken in relation to any sole-sourced contracts, (i) what was the date, title, authorship and cost of each audit, (ii) which ones raised concerns over the value for money taxpayer received, (iii) what concerns were raised and what recommendations were made, (iv) did any result in criminal charges and, if so, (v) which ones?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 321—Ms. Jean Crowder:**

With regards to the performance of First Nations child welfare programs and services: (a) when does Indian and Northern Affairs Canada plan on conducting its next joint policy review of First Nations child welfare, in which federal child welfare funding is compared with provincial funding levels; (b) does the government, in exact figures, currently know how federal funding of child welfare currently compares to the funding levels of child welfare services and programs in the provinces, if yes, with which provinces has the government conducted comparisons and what are the exact numbers that describe the difference between federal and provincial funding levels; (c) what consultation has been done with First Nations and outside experts in establishing performance indicators for First Nations child welfare programs, if any consultation was done, with whom has the government consulted and what were the results of this consultation; (d) are there any plans on establishing or funding a central body to monitor and provide feedback to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada about the performance of child welfare programs; and (e) what plans does the government have to incorporate First Nations in the development of performance reports and the analysis of programs in order to provide a more complete perspective with greater transparency and accountability?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 325—Mr. Bruce Hyer:**

With respect to the forestry sector funding announced in Budget 2009 for each of the following funds, (i) \$80 million to FPInnovations for the Transformative Technologies program, (ii) \$40 million to Natural Resources Canada for pilot-scale demonstration projects, (iii) \$40 million to Canada Wood, Value to Wood, and North American Wood First programs for international marketing, (iv) \$10 million to

Natural Resources Canada to support large-scale demonstrations of wood for construction in off-shore markets: (a) how much of that money has already been allocated; (b) which organizations have received funds and what amounts have they received; (c) to what projects have funds been committed; and (d) what is the breakdown by federal riding for each of these funding commitments?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 330—Hon. Shawn Murphy:**

With regard to the representation of federal departments and agencies in the provinces and territories, can the government provide the details regarding: (a) how many people are employed, both year round and on a seasonal basis, by Environment Canada in the province of Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.); (b) how many of the P.E.I. Environment Canada employees are stationed in the federal riding of Charlottetown; (c) the job description of each Environment Canada position held in P.E.I.; (d) the length of term for each Environment Canada position held in P.E.I.; and (e) how much federal funding the P.E.I. branch of Environment Canada will receive during this fiscal year 2009-2010?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 331—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With respect to genocide: (a) does the government define the term according to the 1951 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; (b) how does the government qualify and quantify "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" (e.g. is there a critical threshold that must be surpassed in terms of numbers of people killed, extent of physical destruction), and how does the government distinguish among domestic conflict, genocide and war; (c) what are the government's legal and ethical responsibilities to intervene and protect as a signatory to the 1951 Convention; (d) what is the decision-making process that the government takes in determining whether killing is genocide or not, whether Canada takes action or not, and what possible action might look like; (e) how does the government ensure that it does not use the wording of the convention, namely the lack of numbers of dead or displaced to constitute genocide, to avoid enforcing it; (f) does the government have any measures in place to ensure that national sovereignty is not used as an excuse to prevent Canada from enforcing United Nations regulations; (g) what is the decision-making process that ensures that Canada has multiple viewpoints before making a decision on a possible genocide, and does not just take the viewpoint of a main party while ignoring the opposing side and third-parties; (h) has the government examined past genocides, and identified early warnings, where Canada might have taken action earlier, what the savings would have been in terms of human life, society, and the economy, and how such lessons might be applied to current conflicts, such as Pakistan and Sudan; (i) what factors has the government identified as potentially leading to genocide, and has it developed an early-warning system or response centre / institution; (j) what specific tactics has the government established to stop genocide; (k) does the government have a special representative for genocide prevention, as well as access to people who are experts in genocide early warning and, if so, to what departments do they belong, and do they have sufficient funding to properly do their jobs; and (l) what legislation is in place to allow Canada to take action, and to hold aggressors to account?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 332—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With respect to Sri Lanka, what is the government doing: (a) to accelerate the processing of visas and refugee claims for those living in refugee camps, and specifically, how many applications have been made, and how many processed; (b) to help Canadian citizens of Tamil heritage locate their family members; (c) to increase humanitarian assistance and medical aid to those living in refugee camps, and specifically, how much aid is being sent, in what form, how is it being tracked, and how is delivery ensured for those in need; (d) to assure full access to the camps by the international community and journalists; (e) to ensure a comprehensive effort at national reconciliation with full recognition of the rights of all communities and respect for the rule of law; and (f) to determine whether there is classification, dehumanization, or extermination of the Tamil people?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 333—Hon. Gurbax Malhi:**

With respect to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, what has been the total departmental spending on citizenship courts, divided by line item, for each of the last ten fiscal years (i) nationally, (ii) in each province and territory, and (iii) in each of Mississauga, Toronto and Ottawa, Ontario, Québec City and Montréal, Quebec, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Saskatoon and Regina, Saskatchewan, Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta, Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 334—Hon. Gurbax Malhi:**

With respect to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration: (a) what has been the average total processing time for applications for Permanent Residents and Canadian citizenship submitted in each of the last ten fiscal years (i) nationally, (ii) in each province and territory, (iii) in each of Mississauga, Toronto and Ottawa, Ontario, Québec City and Montréal, Quebec, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Saskatoon and Regina, Saskatchewan, Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta, and Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia; and (b) what has been the total backlog of applications for Canadian citizenship in each of the last ten fiscal years (i) nationally, (ii) in each province and territory, (iii) in each of Mississauga, Toronto and Ottawa, Ontario, Québec City and Montréal, Quebec, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Saskatoon and Regina, Saskatchewan, Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta, and Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 335—Hon. Gurbax Malhi:**

With regard to temporary residence visas (visitor visas): (a) in each year during the period of 1986 to 2009, for each Canadian High Commission, Embassy, and Consulate around the world, what was the number of visitor visa applications (i) submitted in each year during the period, (ii) approved each year during the period, (iii) refused each year during the period and the reasons given for each refusal; (b) what regulations are in place with respect to compassionate considerations for visitor visa applicants; and (c) in each year during the period of 1986 to 2009, for each Canadian High Commission, Embassy, and Consulate around the world, what was the total amount of revenue collected from (i) all visitor visa applicants, (ii) applicants whose visitor visa applications were refused?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 336—Hon. Gurbax Malhi:**

What was the total federal spending from Industry Canada in the riding of Bramalea—Gore—Malton during each fiscal year from 2004-2005 to 2007-2008, itemized according to: (a) the date the money was received in the riding; (b) the dollar amount of the expenditure; (c) the federal program from which the funding came; (d) the department responsible for allocation of the funding; and (e) the recipient of the funding?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 338—Mr. Glen Pearson:**

Given that Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) commitment to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to global poverty reduction, based on the CIDA Report on Plans and Priorities 2009-2010: (a) how is CIDA contributing to the fulfillment of MDGs 4 and 5; (b) what specific CIDA programs have been instituted to address MDGs 4 and 5; and (c) how much spending has been allocated by CIDA to these specific programs and to the overall attainment of these goals?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 339—Mr. Glen Pearson:**

With regards to the implementation of Bill C-293, An Act respecting the provision of official development assistance abroad, which received Royal Assent in May 2008 and which states that for each Official Development Assistance (ODA) disbursement, the responsible Minister must be of the opinion that this disbursement meets three simultaneous tests including, contributing to poverty reduction, taking into account the perspectives of the poor and is being consistent with international human rights standards: (a) what is the process by which this legislation has been

applied to current Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) programming; (b) how was this legislation addressed in terms of CIDA's rationale for removal of six African countries from its list of focus; (c) how has the application process for CIDA funding been changed to reflect the provisions of this legislation; (d) how have program reporting mechanisms been changed to reflect the provisions of this legislation; (e) how have the provisions of this legislation been adapted as criteria for multi-lateral funding; and (f) how has the agency educated CIDA employees on the provisions of this legislation?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 340—Mr. Glen Pearson:**

With regard to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) expenditures, what are the: (a) most recent statistical updates on International Assistance; (b) detailed breakdown of expenditures by department and unit within CIDA, for the most recent three fiscal years; (c) definitions of what precisely is counted in Official Development Assistance, Humanitarian Assistance and the International Assistance Envelope; (d) cost of the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) deployments to Pakistan, in October 2005 and Sri Lanka, in 2004-2005, and specifically which part of these deployments were covered by CIDA; (e) most recent five fiscal year breakdowns of funds provided to all United Nations Agencies, directly to foreign governments (bilateral) and to non-governmental organisations (excluding the Red Cross); (f) most recent numbers for all CIDA Gender-related program expenditures; and (g) most recent five fiscal year breakdowns of all CIDA overheads (administrative costs)?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 341—Mr. Glen Pearson:**

With regard to the Canadian International Development Agency International Humanitarian Assistance Directorate (IHA): (a) how precisely are funding decisions made within the mandate of the IHA Directorate; (b) who has the final authority on IHA funding decisions; (c) what criteria are used by the final decision-making authority when allocating IHA funding; (d) what has been done over the last two fiscal years to improve the timeliness of IHA funding; (e) what level of funding and human resources are provided to monitoring and evaluation of IHA-funded projects; (f) how has Canada progressed on its commitments to the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative; and (g) what is the status of the development of a Humanitarian Assistance Framework, as committed to in Canada's 2006 Domestic Implementation Plan for the GHD?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 345—Mr. Paul Dewar:**

With respect to the procurement of temporary personnel services in the National Capital Region over the last five years: (a) (i) what are the total expenditures for such services, on an annual basis, (ii) on an annual basis, what amount is spent by each department or government agency; (b) (i) which companies received contracts to provide temporary personnel services, (ii) what is the combined annual total of all contracts awarded to each company, (iii) which companies received sole sourced contracts, on what dates, in what amounts, (iv) why were their contracts not competitively sourced; (c) (i) on an annual basis, how many people were hired by temporary employment agencies to work for the federal government and its agencies, (ii) on an annual basis and by department or agency, how many employees were hired; (d) (i) what is the average length of time an employee remains on contract, (ii) how many workers, in number and percentage of overall hires, begin on contract and are eventually offered full time positions within the federal civil service; and (e) (i) what is the business case for using temporary workers instead of permanent members of the civil service, (ii) what savings does the government make in salary, pension and benefits by using temporary workers rather than permanent workers, as a total amount and on an average per worker basis, (iii) what is the average hourly amount a temporary agency receives based on the hourly wage a temporary worker is paid for their labour?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 347—Ms. Ruby Dhalla:**

What funds, grants, loans and loan guarantees has the government issued through its various departments and agencies in the constituency of Brampton—Springdale for the period of January 24, 2006 to April 2009 inclusive, and in each case where applicable: (a) what was the program under which the payment was made; (b) what were the names of the recipients; (c) what was the monetary value of the payment made; (d) on what date was the payment made; and (e) what was the percentage of program funding covered by the payment received?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 349—Ms. Ruby Dhalla:**

What funds, grants, loans and loan guarantee has the government issued through the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development over \$1,000, since January 1, 2006, and in each case where applicable: (a) what was the name of the recipient; (b) what was the constituency of the recipient; (c) what was the program for which the grant, loan, or loan guarantee was given; (d) what was the date the application was received; (e) what was the amount of the individual grant, loan, or loan guarantee; (f) what was the date the payment was made; and (g) what was the total amount from all programs received by the recipient in that calendar year?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 351—Ms. Megan Leslie:**

With regard to spending related to Abousfian Abdelrazik: (a) what has been the total spending related to consular assistance given in Khartoum; (b) what have been the costs of the legal case on the part of the government; and (c) what have been the costs of communications and media work?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 352—Hon. Dan McTeague:**

With regard to the Home Income Tax Credit (HRTC): (a) what action has the government taken to implement the HRTC by (i) informing the public of the existence of the credit, (ii) instructing the CRA on how to apply the HRTC, (iii) passing legislation to implement the credit; (b) what is (i) the total cost of the public awareness campaign associated with the HRTC, (ii) the revenue lost due to the credit; and (c) what will the HRTC apply to?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 354—Mr. Paul Szabo:**

With regards to the Assisted Human Reproduction Act: (a) what regulations are required under the Act; (b) which of those regulations have been drafted; (c) which of those regulations have been referred to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health; and (d) what regulations have been adopted and enacted?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 355—Mr. Paul Szabo:**

With regards to June 2009 Report on the Economic Action Plan and specifically the Employment Insurance Stimulus Analysis on page 104, what are the detailed computations for each line item totalling \$2.7 billion and what are the specific reasons why freezing of employment insurance rates constitute a stimulus?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 356—Mr. Paul Szabo:**

With regards to Infrastructure funding by the government since 2005: (a) what projects have been funded; (b) what was the total value for each project; (c) how much of the funding was provided by the Province of Ontario for each project; (d) how much of the funding was provided by the City of Mississauga for each project; (e) on what date was each project approved; and (f) on what date was the expenditure made by the government for each project?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 357—Ms. Olivia Chow:**

With regard to temporary resident visa applications, broken down by each visa office what is: (a) the number of cases handled in each visa category (such as visitors, students etc); (b) the percentage of applications turned down in each visa category; (c) the background explanation on the rationale for refusal in each visa category; (d) the number of re-applications and the associated refusal and acceptance rates; (e) the number of applications approved by the Minister's discretionary power on humanitarian ground; (f) the number of cases subsequently being reviewed by a federal appeals court, and its associated refusal and approval rate; (g) the number of refused and approved male and female applicants; (h) the number of refused and approved applicants by the following age groups 18-24, 25-34, 35-54, 55+; (i) the number of officers who process temporary resident visa applications; (j) the average wait time to obtain a decision from the date of application; and (k) the level of security clearance for all staff handling applications?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 358—Ms. Olivia Chow:**

With regard to the \$4 billion Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, the \$1 billion Green Infrastructure Fund, and the Building Canada Fund, respectively, since the 2009 fiscal year: (a) what percentage of applications are for public transit; (b) what is the total dollar amount that these public transit applications represent; (c) how many of these public transit projects have been approved and rejected; (d) what is the approval and rejection rate percentages for public transit project applications versus the average; (e) what dollar amounts have been approved and rejected in each of these three funds for public transit projects; (f) how many projects and how much funding have been spent through the \$2 billion Gas Tax Fund, and the \$1.3 billion Public Transit Capital Trust; and (g) what percentage of the \$20 billion in currently unmet requirements for Canadian transit systems (according to the Canadian Urban Transit Association) do these funds address?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 359—Ms. Hall Findlay:**

With respect to information maintained by the office of the Receiver General and Public Works and Government Services Canada in the Central Financial Management Reporting System (CFMRS) relating to all government allocations, expenditures and lapses for fiscal year 2008-2009: (a) what were the cumulative allocations by department for fiscal year 2008-2009 as reflected in the CFMRS on June 17, 2009; (b) what were the cumulative expenditures by department for fiscal year 2008-2009 as reflected in the CFMRS on June 17, 2009; and (c) what were the cumulative lapses by department for fiscal year 2008-2009 as reflected in the CFMRS on June 17, 2009?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 361—Mr. Peter Julian:**

With respect to government advertising campaigns for the last three fiscal years: (a) which departments or agencies were engaged in such campaigns; (b) what was the stated objectives and purpose of each; (c) when, at what cost, and for what length of time, did each run; (d) which private companies were involved in the conception, design, and production of the ads; (e) were any advertising contracts sole-sourced and, if so, which ones and why; (f) what was the target audience of each campaign; (g) in which mediums, publications and television markets did they appear; (h) what analysis was done on the effectiveness of each campaign, who undertook the analysis and at what cost; and (i) which campaigns failed to meet the stated objectives of the campaign, and why?

(Return tabled)



*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 362—Mr. Peter Julian:**

With regard to loans and loan guarantees issued under the authority of the government: (a) does the government have loans or loan guarantees outstanding to (i) Royal Bank of Canada, (ii) Manulife Financial, (iii) BCE Inc., (iv) Bank of Nova Scotia, (v) Thompson Reuters, (vi) Toronto-Dominion Bank, (vii) EnCana, (viii) CIBC, (ix) Husky Energy, (x) Imperial Oil, (xi) Suncor Energy, (xii) Petro-Canada, (xiii) Canadian Natural Resources, (xiv) Sun Life Financial, (xv) Canadian National Railway, (xvi) Bank of Montreal, (xvii) Great-West Lifeco, (xviii) Talisman Energy, (xix) Power Financial, (xx) Great-West Life Assurance, (xxi) Teck Cominco, (xxii) Power Corporation of Canada, (xxiii) ACE Aviation Holdings, (xxiv) Research in Motion, (xxv) Telus Corporation and, if so; (b) when were the loans and loan guarantees issued; (c) what was the full amount each of the loan's principle and of the loan guarantee's coverage; (d) how much of the principle has been repaid in each instance; (e) how much interest on the principle has been repaid in each instance; (f) under what program or authority was the loan or loan guarantee granted in each instance; (g) what are the repayment terms for the loan in each instance; (h) are any of these loans in default, and if so, by how much; and (i) has any or all of the loan been forgiven?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 367—Ms. Denise Savoie:**

With regard to spending related to Omar Khadr: (a) what has been the total spending related to interrogations and intelligence work; (b) what have been the costs of the legal case on the part of the government; and (c) what have been the costs of communication and media work?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 368—Ms. Denise Savoie:**

With regard to spending related to Ronald Smith: (a) what has been the total spending related to consular assistance given in Khartoum; (b) what have been the costs of the legal case on the part of the government; and (c) what have been the costs of communication and media work?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 369—Mr. Robert Oliphant:**

Concerning the Akwesasne Mohawk border dispute: (a) on what dates did Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) or other government officials meet with the Akwesasne, who was present at these meetings, and what was discussed; (b) on what dates did CBSA or other government officials communicate with the Akwesasne, either by phone or via correspondence, who participated, and what was discussed; (c) has the Minister or anyone representing the Minister ever spoken or met with the Akwesasne and, if so, when, where, and what was discussed; (d) when was the government made aware that the Akwesasne would protest the arming of border guards, and that this protest could result in the shutdown of the Cornwall Island border crossing post, and how did that occur; (e) what is the rationale for the government's decision to proceed with the arming of the border guards at the Cornwall Island border crossing on June 1, 2009, given the likelihood of protest by the Akwesasne, and given that the policy is being rolled out at border crossings until 2016; (f) did the government receive any advice to delay the implementation of the arming policy at this specific border crossing and, if so, when, by whom, and what was the basis for the advice; (g) were any actions taken by the government to try and prevent the closing of the border post on Cornwall Island and, if so, what were they and when did they occur; (h) when was the government informed that CBSA workers would be walking off the job at midnight June 1, 2009, and by whom; (i) what did the government do to prepare for the abandonment of the Cornwall Island border post by the CBSA; (j) what did the government do to safeguard highly sensitive material held at the border post, such as computer files, paperwork, etc., that could compromise national security if it were pilfered; (k) has anyone been into the Cornwall Island border crossing post since the CBSA evacuated the premises at midnight on June 1, 2009 and, if so, who, when and for what purpose were they there; (l) who is in charge of ensuring that the security of the border crossing post itself is maintained while it is non-operational, and how often are they surveying the post; (m) what actions has the government taken since the shutdown of the Cornwall Island border post to divert commercial and tourist traffic to other border posts, when did those actions take place, and what were they; (n) has the government received an assessment of how much money the closure of the Cornwall Island border post is costing the government and the economy and, if so, what did the assessments say; (o) since the closure of the Cornwall Island border post, has the government taken any

actions to increase resources at surrounding border crossings to help deal with the increased traffic; (p) were any stakeholders consulted about the arming of border guards on Cornwall Island and, if so, when did the consultations take place, who was present, and what was the content of these consultations; and (q) was the Customs Excise Union consulted about the closure of the Cornwall Island border post and, if so, when, and what was their position on the closure of the border post?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 372—Hon. Bob Rae:**

With regards to Abousfian Abdelrazik: (a) what steps, if any, has the government taken to act in accordance with the Federal Court ruling that Mr. Abdelrazik's constitutional rights were breached when he was denied an emergency passport; and (b) does the government plan to issue Mr. Abdelrazik an emergency passport in accordance with section 10.1 of the Passport Order and, if not, (i) why not in light of Mr. Justice Zinn's ruling, (ii) will it appeal the decision by the Federal Court?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 374—Ms. Libby Davies:**

With respect to federal monies earmarked for the Canadian Wind Energy Association (CanWEA), on an annual basis, for the last four years: (a) what funds have been disbursed to CanWEA and for what purposes; and (b) what funds slated to support wind energy producers were diverted to research and development of non-renewable energy projects, including but not limited to the Clean Energy Fund, (i) on what dates were the funds diverted and to whom, (ii) why were they diverted?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 375—Hon. Wayne Easter:**

With regard to the proposed closure of the prison farms run by Correctional Services Canada (CSC): (a) how many CSC prison farms currently exist and where are they located; (b) what was the rationale for establishing the Prison Farm Program at its inception, and what was the rationale for the location of the farms; (c) how much revenue does each CSC farm generate; (d) what is the value of the each CSC farm property; (e) have any audits or evaluations on specific farm operations, or the CSC Prison Farm Program in general, been conducted, and if so, what did they conclude; (f) has CSC, any government department, or any external organization conducted studies or evaluations of the CSC Prison Farm Program and if so, what did they conclude; (g) with regards to CSC's statement that the proposed closures are the result of few prisoners securing agriculture-related jobs after their release and that the farm program fails to reflect the realities of the employment world and the current needs of the labour market, (i) what evidence does the government have to support this statement, (ii) does the government have statistics or other information regarding prisoners' employment after release within the agriculture sector, and if so, what are they; (iii) does the government have information regarding the overall employment rate of prisoners post-release, in all sectors, who have participated in the Prison Farm Program, and if so, what is it; (h) was a cost-benefit analysis conducted of the prison farms program before the decision to terminate the program was made, and if so, when was it conducted and what did it say; (i) has the government or any organization collected statistics on the recidivism rates of offenders that take part in the Prison Farm Program, and if so, what do they say; (j) how much food currently produced by the Prison Farm Program is sold back to CSC for prisoners' consumption, and what does the Prison Farm Program do with any remaining output; (k) what is the cost to CSC of buying food from the prison farms as compared to outsourcing; (l) has the government been receiving quotes from vendors that will replace the food provided to CSC by the prison farms, and if so, when were those quotes received, how much were they for, and what are their details; (m) with regards to the abattoirs operated by the CSC, (i) how many are there and where are they located, (ii) what is the operational cost of each abattoir, (iii) how much income does each abattoir generate, (iv) how many outside clients use the abattoirs, (v) has the government conducted any analysis of the cost to the local communities of shutting down the abattoirs, and if so, what did they find; and (n) with regards to an independent panel appointed to review the operations of CSC, as part of the government's commitment to protecting Canadian families and communities, did they study the Prison Farm Program, and what were their findings?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 376—Hon. Wayne Easter:**

How much funding, to be identified by program title with the relevant amounts contributed by the federal government identified, was spent by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada between August 31, 2008 and April 1, 2009 to Prince Edward Island potato producers: (a) to individual producers or through the PEI Potato Board; and (b) as direct payment programs or cost-shared programs with the provincial government?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 377—Hon. Wayne Easter:**

How much financial support, to be identified by program and calendar year, including cost-shared programming with the government of Prince Edward Island or any other provincial government, has been provided by federal government departments or agencies to the Atlantic Beef Plant between December 9, 2007 and April 1, 2009?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 379—Ms. Judy Foote:**

With regard to the Small Craft Harbours programs administered by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, since fiscal year 2002-2003 inclusive: (a) what are the names of the recipients of each grant or contribution made under this program; (b) what is the location of the work or project each grant or contribution has been made in respect of; (c) what is the amount of each grant or contribution; and (d) what are the names and locations of all harbours or port facilities which have been added to or removed from the Schedule of Harbours at any time since January 1, 1996?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 380—Mr. Todd Russell:**

With regard to infrastructure in Labrador: (a) has the federal government at any time since November 1, 2003, received any proposals, requests, or other like documentation in support of funding for all or any of the following projects or proposals, namely: (i) Nain Airport, (ii) Port Hope Simpson Airport, (iii) Goose Bay airport, (iv) any other airports or airstrips in Labrador, specifying which airports or airstrips, (v) widening, paving, or any other work on the Trans-Labrador Highway, specifying the nature and location of the work, (vi) any other work on any other highway in Labrador, specifying the nature and location of the work, (vii) a new ferry or ferries for the Labrador Straits ferry service, (viii) a harbour facility in or near the vicinity of Northwest Point, (ix) the construction of a hydro-electric plant at Gull Island, (x) the construction of a hydro-electric plant at Muskrat Falls, (xi) the construction of a transmission line from Labrador to Newfoundland, (xii) the construction of a transmission line from Labrador to Quebec, (xiii) the construction of a transmission line from Newfoundland to any other location in Canada, specifying which location, (xiv) a fixed link across the Strait of Belle Isle, (xv) a feasibility study concerning the construction of a highway from central to northern Labrador, or (xvi) broadband internet access in the region; (b) when did the federal government receive any proposal referred to above; (c) which department or departments has received the proposal or proposals; (d) what federal funding share is the provincial government seeking in respect of each or any proposal; (e) what has been the response of the appropriate federal government department to each or any proposal; (f) did the federal government receive from the provincial government, in December 2008, a proposal concerning funding for "Labrador priorities" or a similar heading, rubric, or subject; (g) if so, what was the nature, scope, and content of the priorities identified in that proposal; (h) which department or department has dealt or is dealing with that proposal on behalf of the federal government; and (i) what has been the response of the federal government to the proposal?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 381—Mr. Todd Russell:**

With regard to the following funding programs administered by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, (i) Integrating energy efficiency/renewable energy (EE/RE) technologies into Infrastructure projects, (ii) Large Energy Projects, (iii) First Nations Infrastructure Fund, (iv) Community Economic Development Program, (v) Community Economic Opportunities Program, (vi) Partnership Advisory Forums, (vii) Targeted Investment Program, (viii) Innovation and Knowledge Fund, (ix) Northern Contaminants Program, (x) Recreational Infrastructure Canada (RInC) program in Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut: (a) how many applications

have been made in each fiscal year since 2005-2006; (b) how many of those applications have been successful; (c) how many have been unsuccessful; (d) of the successful applications, what has been the value of the grant, contribution, loan, or other funding, and the recipient; (e) what is the location of the project or activity in respect of which the funding has been allocated; and (f) what is the description or nature of the project or activity?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 386—Hon. Anita Neville:**

With regard to expenditures, funding contributions, or cost shared contributions to short-line rail in Manitoba: (a) how are expenditures, funding contributions, and cost shared contributions determined; (b) what rail companies have received expenditures, funding contributions, or cost shared contributions; (c) how much federal money has been allocated to short line rail in Manitoba since the 2006-2007 fiscal year; (d) how many companies or groups have applied for any type of funding; and (e) which ones by name have been rejected?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 388—Hon. Scott Brison:**

With regards to the 2007-2008 Departmental Performance Report for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade: (a) in section 2.2.1—Program Activity #1—Trade Policy and Negotiations: given \$58.1 million in planned spending versus \$45.7 million in actual spending in the fiscal year of 2007-2008, what programs received less funding than anticipated, by how much for each program, and for what reason; and (b) in section 2.2.3—Program Activity #3—International Business Development – in reference to Planned Outcome #3—"Enhanced trade finance and risk management tools for high-risk markets", for fiscal year 2007-2008, what specific support functions and risk management tools were discontinued, when they were discontinued, (i) what is the budget for each, for the fiscal years of 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 389—Hon. Scott Brison:**

With respect to the Report on Plans and Priorities 2009-2010 for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, for each fiscal year between 2004-2005 and 2011-2012, what is the actual and planned spending for each component program falling under Program Activity 3 International Commerce?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 390—Hon. Navdeep Bains:**

With regards to Transport Canada's Ecomobility program: (a) what are the total number of contracts awarded, their value, and the names of those organizations that received contracts all broken down by both province and constituency; and (b) what are the details of each contract that was awarded and whether the contract was tendered or sole-sourced?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 391—Hon. Navdeep Bains:**

What is the total amount of government funding, allocated within the constituency of Mississauga—Brampton South since fiscal year 2005-2006 up to and including the current fiscal year, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 392—Hon. Navdeep Bains:**

With regards to government spending on communications for each fiscal year since 2005-2006: (a) what is the total amount of government spending on communications per fiscal year; (b) how much does each department or agency spend on communications in general per fiscal year; (c) how much is spent by each department or agency in the following categories: advertising (broken down by television, radio, newspaper, internet), web design and maintenance and the printing of publications per fiscal year; (d) what is the total amount of money spent on backdrops used at press conferences per fiscal year; (e) detail total government spending by department or agency on any other communications products not covered by the above categories; (f) how much is spent on communications staff in each department or agency per fiscal year; and (g) what is the total number of communications staff in each department or agency?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 393—Hon. Navdeep Bains:**

With regards to Citizenship applications: (a) what is the processing time for applications broken down by Immigration office and provided for each calendar year since 2006; (b) what are the geographic areas those offices serve; (c) how many full-time, part-time and temporary staff are employed in each of these offices; (d) how many full-time, part-time and contract staff specifically handle citizenship applications; (e) what is the budget allocated to each of those offices for each fiscal year since 2005-2006; (f) how much of the budget is committed specifically for the handling of citizenship applications per fiscal year; and (g) what information was provided to the Minister on Citizenship processing times since 2006?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 394—Hon. Marlene Jennings:**

With respect to the government's 2009 spending: (a) excluding the Building Canada Fund, how much money was spent in the first 120 days of the government's Economic Action Plan, that is from January 27 to May 26 on economic stimulus measures; (b) including the Building Canada Fund, how much money was spent in the first 120 days of the Plan, that is from January 27 to May 26 on economic stimulus measures; (c) with respect to the Building Canada Fund, which applications have received funding since 2006 within the province of Quebec; and (d) with respect to the Building Canada Fund, which applications have received funding since 2006 within the City of Montréal?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 396—Mr. Gerard Kennedy:**

With respect to the Economic Action Plan in Budget 2009: (a) under the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, (i) what projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what are each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (b) under the Building Fund Communities Component top-up, (i) what projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what are each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (c) under the Provincial/Territorial Base funding acceleration, (i) what projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what are each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (d) under the Recreational Infrastructure program, (i) what projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what are each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (e) under the Green Infrastructure Fund, (i) what projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what are each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; and (f) under the National recreational trails program, (i) what projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners

involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what are each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 397—Mr. Gerard Kennedy:**

With respect to the Knowledge Infrastructure programs within Budget 2009: (a) under the Universities and colleges program, (i) what projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what are each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (b) under the Canada Foundation for Innovation, (i) what projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what are each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (c) under Canada Health Infoway, (i) what projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what are each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (d) under the broadband in rural communities, (i) what projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what are each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; and (e) under the First Nations infrastructure programs (i) what projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what are each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 398—Mr. Gerard Kennedy:**

With regards to the infrastructure programs within Budget 2009 and the Building Canada plan: (a) what are the due diligence guidelines and processes used to select approved projects for (i) Building Canada Fund Major infrastructure, (ii) Building Canada Fund Communities Component, (iii) Public-Private Partnerships Fund, (iv) Gateways and Border Crossings Fund, (v) Provincial-Territorial Base Funding, (vi) Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, (vii) Green Infrastructure Fund, (viii) Universities and Colleges Knowledge Infrastructure program; (b) what auditing requirements are being placed on approved projects for (i) Building Canada Fund Major infrastructure, (ii) Building Canada Fund Communities Component, (iii) Public-Private Partnerships Fund, (iv) Gateways and Border Crossings Fund, (v) Provincial-Territorial Base Funding, (vi) Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, (vii) Green Infrastructure Fund, (viii) Universities and Colleges Knowledge Infrastructure program; (c) was any targeting done for areas with respect to unemployment level or need for (i) Building Canada Fund Major infrastructure, (ii) Building Canada Fund Communities Component, (iii) Public-Private Partnerships Fund, (iv) Gateways and Border Crossings Fund, (v) Provincial-Territorial Base Funding, (vi) Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, (vii) Green Infrastructure Fund, (viii) Universities and Colleges Knowledge Infrastructure program; and (d) which projects were exempted due to changes in environmental regulations and/or changes to the Navigable waters protection act for (i) Building Canada Fund Major infrastructure, (ii) Building Canada Fund Communities Component, (iii) Public-Private Partnerships Fund, (iv) Gateways and Border Crossings Fund, (v) Provincial-Territorial Base Funding, (vi) Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, (vii) Green Infrastructure Fund, (viii) Universities and Colleges Knowledge Infrastructure program?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders***Question No. 399—Mr. Gerard Kennedy:**

With regards to the infrastructure programs within Budget 2009 and the Building Canada plan: (a) do the Treasury Board guidelines differ in any way between the new infrastructure programs within the Economic Action plan and the Building Canada programs from Budget 2007; and (b) what analysis has been undertaken to evaluate the effects of infrastructure programs on increased costs of construction?

(Return tabled)

\* \* \*

• (1519)

[English]

**STARRED QUESTIONS**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, would you please call Starred Question no. 363. I ask that the question and answer be printed in Hansard as if read.

**\*Question No. 363—Hon. Irwin Cotler:**

With respect to Canada's obligation to prevent genocide: (a) does the government consider the obligation to prevent genocide, pursuant to Article 1 of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to be binding under international law and, if not, on what basis is the government absolved of its obligation under international law; (b) does the government recognize incitement to genocide as a warning sign of genocide; (c) does the government consider the government of Iran to have engaged in incitement to genocide and, if so, what measures has the government taken to respond to the incitement to genocide in Iran, and to curb that incitement to genocide; (d) if the answer to (c) is negative, on what basis does the government dispute the evidence or conclusions presented in the Danger of a Genocidal, Rights-Violating and Nuclear Iran: The Responsibility to Prevent Petition, available online at [http://www.irwincotler.parl.gc.ca/documents/081209\\_petition.pdf](http://www.irwincotler.parl.gc.ca/documents/081209_petition.pdf) (the "Petition"); (e) does the government consider itself to be in standing violation of its "normative and compelling" obligation to "employ all means reasonably available [...] so as to prevent genocide so far as possible" pursuant to the Genocide Convention, as characterized by the International Court of Justice (case no. 91, 26 February 2007) and, if not, on what basis does the government consider its obligation to have been satisfied; (f) does the government consider Iran to have violated the prohibition under the Genocide Convention on direct and public incitement to genocide and, if so, (i) what measures has the government taken to hold Iran accountable for its breach of the Genocide Convention, (ii) has the government or a delegation thereof at the United Nations ever made a public statement calling out Iran for its breach of the Genocide Convention and, if so, by whom was the statement made, to what audience, on what date and at what location; and (g) if the government does not consider Iran to have violated the prohibition under the Genocide Convention on direct and public incitement to genocide, on what basis does the government dispute the evidence or conclusions presented in the Petition?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), yes.

In response to (b), yes.

In response to (c) and (d), Canada and like-minded states will continue to monitor statements emanating from the government of Iran, including its president.

Canada has consistently taken Iran to task for its unacceptable behaviour in international affairs and for the appalling abuses of human rights that the regime carries out against its own people and has publicly condemned President Ahmadinejad's egregious and offensive comments. For the sixth consecutive year in 2008, Canada led the international community in drafting and passing a resolution before the United Nations General Assembly calling upon Iran to respect its international human rights obligations.

In response to (e) Canada delivers on its obligations to both prevent and punish genocide by criminalizing the crime of genocide under its domestic law and thus enabling its domestic prosecution in Canadian courts where there is evidence to support such action. Canada is also a supporter of the International Criminal Court, which both deters and punishes perpetrators of genocide; as well, Canada supported the appointment of a Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide with the mandate to make appropriate recommendations for prevention to the United Nations Security Council through the UN Secretary-General.

Canada delivered a statement on the Responsibility to Protect, R2P, on July 24th at the UN General Assembly Open Debate, which demonstrated our support for the principle and emphasized our continued work in enhancing conflict prevention, preventive advocacy, and early warning mechanisms.

At the international level, Canada has supported the development of the new international norm of the Responsibility to Protect. The concept of the Responsibility to Protect, as endorsed by the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document and reaffirmed by UN Security Council Resolution 1674(2006) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict acknowledges both the responsibility of each individual state as well as the international community to protect civilian populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. According to the summit outcome document, this responsibility of a state towards its own population includes "the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means".

In response to (f), see response to questions (c) and (d).

In response to (g), see response to questions (c) and (d).

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Colombia and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** When question period started, the hon. member for Kings—Hants had just concluded his remarks, so we will move on to the 10-minute question and comment period.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I sense from the member for Kings—Hants almost a fervent conversion over there to supporting a narco-regime, one of the worst and most corrupt governments in the world.

There is one thing that comes to my mind. I come from Hamilton, which is one of the centres of labour activism in Canada where people know and understand their rights. When I was in various coffee shops, people would ask me how in the world Canada could get into bed with Colombia.

Bishop Juan Alberto Cardona from the Methodist Church of Colombia visited us this year and he was very concerned about the fact that this agreement seemed to mask or at least offer a substitute for real labour reform in that country. Within the terms of this free trade agreement, the labour rights that are being touted in this room as progressive are actually side agreements. One thing I learned a long time ago is that letters of intent are not worth the paper they are written on, especially with a government like this.

• (1520)

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is in the interest of Canadians and in the interest of Colombians that we partner with them to provide Colombians with real opportunities outside of the narco-economy.

While I understand the intent of the hon. member in terms of citing the real danger of the narco-economy, I do not understand the logic of preventing the people of Colombia from having legitimate economic opportunities. The fact is if we really want to help reduce the size of the narco-economy, we ought to engage in legitimate economic engagement.

The hon. member's arguments against free trade are consistent with that of his party on every free trade agreement. They are largely ideological. In fact, the member for Toronto Centre and I met with union representatives in Colombia, representing textile workers, professionals and engineers, and other union organizations that support the free trade agreement.

The fact is there is a significant level of support among workers and among labour unions in Colombia representing private sector employees, people who want to have opportunities outside of the narco-economy.

If he is, as he has stated, opposed to the narco-economy in Colombia, then he ought to support measures that provide legitimate economic opportunities to the people of Colombia and economically engage them as opposed to ideologically abandoning them.

**Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the answer given by the member for Kings—Hants. We have heard a lot of this in the debate.

Also, during the member's speech, he made several references to those benefits to Colombia and to the people of Colombia, particularly those who had previously been employed in the narco-economy.

Does the member feel as strongly about what is good in this for Canada?

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, this agreement does provide significant investor protection for Canadian companies doing

business in Colombia. We already have a fairly significant level of trade and investment between our countries, without the additional benefits of a rules-based approach in governance to labour and the environment that is afforded by this treaty, the most robust provisions on labour and the environment of any trade agreement we have signed.

Again, the member for Toronto Centre and I met with Canadian companies doing business in Colombia. Canadian companies are recognized in Colombia as being strong and responsible practitioners of corporate social responsibility and have received recognition and awards for environmental and human rights practices. In fact, they represent great ambassadors for our values in Colombia. Even before this trade agreement, we have seen in recent weeks Brookfield Asset Management announce a \$500 million fund to invest in Colombia. We have seen recently SNC-Lavalin open an office in Bogota.

Canadian companies are investing. We just want to ensure there is a rules-based system to strengthen labour and environmental provisions, which can only improve the situation for the people of Colombia.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the labour issue seems to be the most controversial part of this.

In his speech on May 25, the minister indicated to the House that we had signed a labour accord with Colombia that insisted on both countries following the International Labour Organization rules, regulations and obligations related to trade and labour, which Canada already does.

It would appear there needs to be a bridging of the need to address labour difficulties in order to further justify the sound arguments that bilateral trade for Canada is always a good thing, but this labour issue really has to be addressed.

Could the member give some assurances that there is a plan on how we can strengthen the arguments, vis-à-vis labour regulations?

• (1525)

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely right that labour rights and environmental protection both have to be a strong part of any trade agreement that Canada signs. This agreement does have the most robust measures we have ever agreed to in of our trade agreements. In its annual report, the ILO has recognized that Colombia has made progress.

Obviously a country like Colombia, that has emerged from 40 years of internal strife and civil war largely fuelled by the narco-economy, has a long way to go. Our presence in Colombia has been overwhelmingly positive for the workers and for the people of Colombia, so a rules-based system around our presence and strengthening and fortifying our presence in labour areas has the potential to improve. However, this is quite a robust agreement on labour rights. When we compare this with some of the other ones Colombia signed, it is actually more robust.

*Government Orders*

With regard to the issue of whether a side agreement is less robust than a full chapter treatment, I have talked with some trade lawyers who believe that either can work and that they are equally strong and enforceable, but it depends on the chapter or the side agreement. However, either can work and can be enforceable. Many trade lawyers feel this approach is a reasonable one and sufficiently robust.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party certainly is not listening to human rights organizations. It certainly is not listening to civil society groups. It certainly is not listening to labour representatives. We have seen case after case of the escalating, the rising rate of killings of human rights advocates and trade union members. Those are indisputable facts, and the Liberals just seem to want to go along, once again, I guess for the 80th time, with the Conservatives.

However, the question that is of real concern is that there is simply nothing in this agreement that would protect those labour activists and those human rights advocates.

According to the comptroller general of Colombia, it is estimated that drug traffickers and paramilitaries now “own” about half of the agricultural land in Colombia. Quite simply, they are pushing off indigenous peoples, African Colombians, from their land and forcing them to be displaced people, four million of them.

How can the Liberals reconcile a trade agreement that would not protect those people and, in fact, would enforce and enhance corporation rights at the expense of individual human rights that only the NDP seems to be advocating?

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Toronto Centre and I met with the UN High Commission on Human Rights representative, Christian Salazar, in Colombia. The UNHCHR is working closely with the minister of defence and with other ministers, ensuring that there is a co-operative and legitimate approach to the issues of rights and labour rights, the issues of impunity, demobilization of paramilitary groups. All these issues are important to the people of Colombia, and the UN is actively involved in that. In fact, Mr. Salazar indicated to us that there had been significant progress by—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The first five hours of debate on this bill have expired. We will move on now to the next round, where speeches will be 10 minutes and questions and comments will be 5 minutes.

The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

• (1530)

**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be back in the House with my colleagues. It is especially an honour to speak again on this important Canada-Colombia free trade agreement that has been in the House for many months. We want to ensure that we have a good fulsome discussion and debate and have the facts presented as it is an important agreement for Canada and Colombia as we move forward in the global commerce village.

I would also like to thank the hon. member for Kings—Hants who had a chance to travel to Colombia this summer. The trade committee went last May, but he was not on the committee at that

time. He and his colleague from Toronto Centre had a chance to see first-hand the fantastic city of Bogota and the opportunities for Canada and Colombia as we move forward with this agreement.

As we continue to expand markets worldwide, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague, the Minister of International Trade, the member from Okanagan—Coquihalla, who is also my adjacent neighbour. I know how busy he is and how far around the globe he has travelled to open markets for Canadian businesses. He has been away from home for many days trying to look after our community. Ministers have a difficult task ensuring their constituents are looked after as well as facing the demands of our country. I thank the minister for his continued time and dedication to our community and our country.

We continue to open doors and create new opportunities to strengthen Canada's economy in the face of the current economic downturn. We all know these are challenging times. We have heard from our constituents the fact that for so many years Canada has been reliant on the United States for our free trade. It is a great neighbour to the south and we want to continue to foster that relationship.

If individuals put 80% or 85% of their investments in one portfolio and the market crashes, they soon realize that it is good to diversify. This is one thing that Canada has not done. The previous international trade minister, Mr. Emerson, and now the Minister of International Trade, the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla, continues to expand part of the Conservative government's global commerce strategy.

Colombia is already a significant trading partner with Canada. We saw that first-hand when our committee was there last May. We had a chance to meet with individuals and several companies from Colombia as well as Canadian companies doing business there, bringing the corporate social responsibility model forward.

Colombia is an important destination for exporters and producers. Over the last five years, Canadian exports have doubled, reaching over \$704 million in 2008.

The Colombian market is an exciting one, with approximately 47 million people who are very educated, skilled and an innovative workforce. They want to expand and share their skills and their products and services with us and we want to do the same, and there is no better way than to move this free trade agreement forward.

By eliminating tariffs on a range of products, Canadian exporters and producers will benefit and become more competitive against those in other nations that are also trading with Colombia.

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A free trade agreement would mean the removal of barriers that limit Canadian participation in growing markets and the elimination of tariffs on Canadian exports to help make Canadian goods more competitive in a range of sectors including mining, agriculture and agri-food products.

It would mean a level playing field for Canadian businesses vis-à-vis their competitors that are benefiting from preferential market access terms. Basically we are levelling the playing field.

It would enhance market access for Canadian service providers in areas such as financial, professional, engineering, environmental, mining, oil and gas and construction services, just to name a few.

It would also secure and have a predictable environment for investors. That stability is important to ensure that people have the confidence to invest in foreign countries.

It would also lower prices and improve choice for consumers. We all like to have a greater variety of selection and more choice, which generally means a more competitive market and better prices for Canadian consumers as well.

The bottom line is results for Canadians: a new partnership; new customers; new investors; new links in supply and product chains; and new choices for consumers. In short, Canada would benefit from this agreement.

Sometimes it is difficult to take in the whole picture of how an agreement like this would benefit individual regions or provinces, so this afternoon I will focus my remarks on the benefits of this agreement to specific regions and provinces across the country.

• (1535)

As I mentioned, Canada is already an established and growing market for Canadian exporters in many different sectors, including wheat, pulses, machinery, mining equipment and paper products. Once this new agreement is in place, we expect even more businesses and communities across the country to benefit. The agreement will also help us to sharpen our competitive edge relative to competitors like the EU and the U.S. which have similar negotiations in progress with Colombia.

Our Conservative government knows that Canadian business can compete with the best in the world and we have shown that with other agreements we spoke about earlier today. The minister has been to China and India recently. The Minister of Finance was there as well this summer to expand our Asian market, including Jordan. We are looking at new opportunities throughout the globe to continue to open doors. In today's tough economic times this agreement gives us market access and the level playing field to do it.

Let us start with the benefits of this agreement to Atlantic Canada. Last year, the provinces of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador exported about \$129 million worth of exports to Colombia, directly benefiting such core sectors as oil, paper, paperboard and fertilizers. These sectors will benefit enormously from freer trade with Colombia.

What about machinery and industrial goods? It is no secret that Canadian manufacturers, especially in Canada's industrial heartland in Ontario and Quebec, are facing tough times these days. They need

all the opportunities they can get to ride out this economic storm. That means opening doors in markets like Colombia. This is especially beneficial for dump trucks which is one of the biggest machines exported from Canada.

With this agreement, Colombian tariffs on most machinery and industrial goods would be eliminated. This is especially significant for Canadian manufacturers of mining equipment centred in Ontario and Quebec. This agreement is very important for the Province of Quebec. After all, 17% of Canada's exports to Colombia were from Quebec, almost a full fifth. Quebeckers employed in sectors like the paper and paperboard industry, copper and machinery, will benefit significantly from free trade with Colombia.

The prairie provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba will also benefit greatly from this agreement. The immediate removal of Colombian tariffs from such cornerstone crops as wheat and pulses will make these products from the Canadian Prairies even more competitive in the global market, and the Colombian market will add that much more opportunity for these businesses to expand.

Prairie producers are a cornerstone of our economy. They will see clear benefits from free trade with Colombia. I should also point out that Alberta enjoys a significant investment presence in the Colombian market thanks to companies like Enbridge, Talisman, Petrobank and Nexen. We had the opportunity to meet with some of those business leaders as our trade committee travelled around Colombia.

As oil and gas projects continue developing in the Andes we fully expect this presence to deepen. Our free trade agreement with Colombia will help secure Canadian investments in the region by providing greater predictability and protection for investors. These investment provisions will directly benefit those Alberta firms which are investing in Colombia.

Madam Speaker, like yourself coming from British Columbia, I have the honour of representing the constituents of Kelowna—Lake Country in the Okanagan. Our province also stands to greatly benefit from this agreement, especially British Columbia's mechanical, machinery and paper industries. In fact, many B.C. companies have told us they are looking to expand trade with Colombia, including Greystar Resources and IMW Industries of Chilliwack. With these kinds of benefits across Canada, it is no wonder that Canadian businesses, investors and producers alike have been calling for closer commercial ties with Colombia for some time now. The time to act is now.

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Colombia has an ambitious and aggressive free trade agreement that includes some key competitors for Canada, competitors like the United States and the European Union. Time is of the essence. Our Conservative government knows that we need to take steps sooner rather than later to ensure that Canadian exporters, investors and producers, and regions and provinces across the country are not put at a disadvantage relative to our competitors. They can compete with the best in the world. Let us give them the opportunity to do so, to ride out the current economic storm, and emerge on the other side stronger and more competitive than before.

• (1540)

In closing, that is why I ask all hon. members in the House to support the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement, a free and fair trade agreement that gives hope and opportunity for individuals and businesses in Canada and Colombia, and help us take that next step in building a more globally competitive Canada for the future.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, first of all I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country for his speech and his commitment to free and fair trade agreements. The member mentioned that this is going to help British Columbia. We have raised the issues of human rights and labour laws in Colombia that are negatively affecting the viewpoint of the people in British Columbia.

Can the member tell us what steps are being taken to ensure that those issues are taken care of so that people in British Columbia are not upset when this agreement goes through?

**Mr. Ron Cannan:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from British Columbia for his passion to expand opportunities for our British Columbia businesses across the globe.

As was alluded to earlier by previous speakers, there are two side agreements, both for labour and the environment, to ensure those concerns are addressed. The additional one with regard to human rights in particular is making its efforts to strengthen the economy.

We believe that engagement rather than isolation is the best way to address this aspect. I would use the analogy from the ambassadors who presented to our committee, as well as the president of the country. I think it is the first time a president of a country has addressed a committee. The analogy was that if we see somebody drowning, do we contemplate and say, “Well, we do not think we should look after that person”, or do we rush out. Human nature is that we want to help each other. A rising tide lifts all boats and that is our desire.

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the member for Kelowna—Lake Country. The member believes in competitiveness. The government believes in competitiveness. The International Energy Agency has told countries worldwide that the path out of this global recession is the new green economy and investment in the new green economy.

If the government, as a member of the International Energy Agency, truly embraces a path to come out of this recession, truly embraces the new path of competitiveness, truly believes in proper development and exchange with other nations of the world, why has the government chosen to formulate and agree to an agreement that sidelines human rights and sustainable development?

Surely, we have learned through the past two decades that it is necessary to incorporate that within trade. Surely, they are not being side-barred.

**Mr. Ron Cannan:** Madam Speaker, the fact is that, as has been alluded to previously, human rights is a concern of all of us in this room. Nobody has the franchise on caring and compassion. Each individual has a responsibility to do the best we can to help others.

We were there firsthand with one of the member's hon. colleagues. We visited two school rooms that are funded through CIDA. The fact is it is a helping hand rather than just stepping aside.

Connie Watson, a CBC reporter, presented the fact that we are giving opportunities. The fact is that economic opportunities go hand in hand with human rights and sustainability.

One B.C. business that was there, a forest company from Vancouver Island, was teaching sustainability and corporate social responsibility with human rights and employment standards, so that we can raise the bar and lead by example.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, could the member follow up on those human rights abuses he was talking about, and the steps Colombia has taken to deal with them?

**Mr. Ron Cannan:** Madam Speaker, just quickly, on the human rights situation since President Uribe took office, the violence has decreased by 40%, murders have decreased by 50%, kidnappings are down by 90%, and over 45,000 paramilitaries have been demobilized. The fact is that there is a continued focus on human rights, economic development and looking after people, giving them hope, opportunity and chance. That is what we are doing.

• (1545)

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-23, an act to implement the free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia.

Anyone who has been following the debate so far will not be surprised to learn that I will be speaking in opposition to this bill. All members of the NDP caucus are deeply committed to using all means possible to expose the truth about this deeply flawed agreement. We have grave concerns about the agreement's absolutely unacceptable content and the complete injustice of signing such an agreement while the human rights situation in Colombia continues to deteriorate.

This is a question of fundamental human rights and no compromise can be made. The prevailing assessment by the Canadian and Colombian governments, which suggests that all of Colombia's problems have been taken care of and that the country is ready and open for business, simply lacks credibility. The Uribe Colombian government has one of the worst human rights records in the world.



Let me paint a statistical picture. There are 3.8 million internally displaced people, 57% of whom are women. The UN calls this the worst humanitarian disaster in the western hemisphere and it is growing. Some 955 cases of extrajudicial executions by the army over the last five years have been documented. The numbers are rising. Colombian soldiers are accused of executing peasants in rural areas and passing them off as leftist rebels killed in combat, a practice known as “false positives”.

Sixty-two Mafia-like, ex-paramilitary, drug-trafficking criminal networks control economic activities and political institutions in 23 of the 31 provinces and are vying with guerrilla groups for control of the drug trade. Despite the demobilization of over 31,000 paramilitary death squad members, abuse and insecurity prevail in the countryside.

Over 60 lawmakers, including senators, governors and mayors representing the president's political coalition, are under investigation by the country's attorney general and supreme court for alleged relationships with paramilitary chiefs, labeled as terrorists by Canada, and collusion in elections fraud. Seventeen are in jail together with Uribe's former head of secret services, campaign manager and high-ranking military officials.

These facts do not just suggest but prove that the Canadian government is wrong when it says that the problems in Colombia have been redressed. It is not just New Democrats who are pointing that out. We are joined by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, Colombian trade unions, the Canadian Labour Congress, human rights advocates, victims of violence, Colombian judges, prosecutors, government oversight staff, journalists, legislators and Afro-Colombian, indigenous and other community leaders.

All of these groups have called for caution in initiating free trade with the Colombian government, at least until there are demonstrable improvements in its record on human rights and an end to the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of these human rights violations.

Trade can contribute to a country's social and economic development, but only if trade policy supports not undermines human rights and development policy goals. Experts have concluded, given the context of violence against trade unionists and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of peasants from their resource-rich land, that the trade measures in the Colombia FTA will exacerbate the human rights crisis while the labour rights and environmental provisions in the deal are ineffectual.

It is these two aspects of the deal that I would like to focus on in the few remaining minutes I have left to speak on this trade agreement in the House today. As the NDP's labour critic, let me begin by addressing the labour side agreement. Contrary to the Conservatives' contention that by some magical trickle-down effect free trade agreements will inevitably bring an end to human rights abuses, the labour side agreement to the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement does nothing to guarantee the protection of labour rights.

The shocking reality is that, in the event of the murder of a trade unionist in Colombia, labour protection simply means that the Colombian government would have to pay money into a develop-

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ment fund. Kill a trade unionist, pay a fine. Over 2,200 labour activists have been murdered since 1991 and the hunt for trade unionists in Colombia will go on if the price is right. Such is the Conservative government's concept of labour protection.

The penalty for killing a trade unionist was capped at \$15 million in any one year, paid by the Colombian government into a development fund. To put this into perspective, one year's maximum payment of \$15 million equates to \$5,628 per trade unionist already killed.

● (1550)

How would Canadians feel if the Prime Minister agreed to do the same kind of treatment to those here who intentionally set out to kill labour organizers within our own borders? This is an outrageous lack of appreciation of human life and it is no labour protection at all.

It is impossible to separate human rights from international trade, and negotiating a free trade agreement with Colombia is no exception.

Before ratifying and implementing an agreement with Colombia, we must development and implement a human rights impact assessment to ensure there are binding and enforceable protections for labour and human rights within the framework of fair trade. In fact both the Canadian and Colombian governments should welcome such an independent and impartial assessment. They claim that conditions have improved and human rights violations have decreased already, but in reality they know the situation in Colombia would never pass such scrutiny.

That brings me to the agreement on the environment. As I outlined, we know that paramilitary terror and massacres have been used to try to dismantle indigenous Afro-Colombian and other social movements and vulnerable groups in order to take over their resource rich territories for the benefit of the mostly multinational extractive industries and agriculture, such as African palm oil. Few controls exist to ensure that extractive companies behave responsibly.

Let us be honest: the Colombian market is hardly a top-tier market for Canada. Only 0.15% of Canadian exports actually go to Colombia. As Glen Hodgson, vice-president and chief economist of the Conference Board of Canada has pointed out:

Our annual trade with Colombia is about the same level as that with South Dakota and is actually smaller than that with Delaware or Rhode Island. Compared to other markets much closer, Colombia is not really a major player. Eighty per cent of Colombia's imports to Canada are actually duty free already. The gains from free trade are probably not as great as they would be in other cases.

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So why is this free trade deal such a priority for Canada? It has nothing to do with trade and everything to do with investments. Since this agreement would contain investment protection provisions, it would help Canadian investors in Colombia, particularly in the mining sector. If past agreements are any indication, the investment protection provisions in the Canada-Colombia agreement would contain provisions that would allow investors to directly sue a foreign government if it adopts regulations that diminish the output of their investments.

That means that progress on environmental and labour laws would be actively constrained by the very language of the free trade deal. It puts the interests of Canadian investors ahead of any improvements in the Colombian standard of living. So much for the Conservative government's contention that this trade deal will actually encourage and facilitate improvements to human rights and environmental and labour standards.

If I am right that this deal has much less to do with trade than with protecting the interests of investors, then it all comes down to politics. However, I would like to remind the government that concerned citizens in Canada far outnumber Canadian mining operators in Colombia. Those citizens have made their opposition a clarion call to action.

The Prime Minister should be well aware of the thousands of postcards he has received from the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. I am proud to have a particularly active chapter in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. It has gathered signatures from petitioners of all ages calling on the government to live up to its commitment on corporate social responsibility. They want to see the recommendations of the national round table implemented now.

Standing with the people of the global south, they insist that the Prime Minister and the government develop legal mechanisms to hold Canadian mining companies accountable for their actions abroad. The line in their petition that the Prime Minister really needs to hear is that they are not going away.

That is the real political message. Faith groups, labour groups, environmental groups, indigenous groups and human rights groups are all not going away, and neither are New Democrats. We are united in our opposition to the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement and we will continue to do everything in our power to seek justice for the citizens of Colombia by stopping this irresponsible deal.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for outlining some of the issues we have already raised in the House.

There are a couple of other issues that have arisen since we last discussed this in the House in the spring when the NDP forced the Conservative government to pull this bad deal off the order paper. The first is that a drug lord imprisoned in the U.S. has said that he and his illegal paramilitary army funded the 2002 election of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe. This particular drug lord was the successor of drug lord Pablo Escobar, in the city of Medellin, and was already linked in the past to President Uribe. We also have very clear information from the *Washington Post* that the Colombian presidential palace had ordered wiretapping and general surveillance

of supreme court judges, opposition politicians, activists and journalists.

When we add that to the question of the ties of this administration to murderous paramilitary thugs, my question for the member for Hamilton Mountain is how Conservative members can say they are opposed to the drug trade, criminality, brutal thugs, then try to give a preferential trade agreement to an administration that has its hands soaked in blood.

• (1555)

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster has given me the terribly difficult task of trying to get into the heads of the Conservatives. Clearly anybody who has been following the debate closely will know their position makes absolutely no sense.

The points raised by my hon. colleague are obviously spot on. This is not an agreement that anybody in the House should be able to support. In fact the member for Burnaby—New Westminster has taken a leadership role in rallying people, not just in the House but right across this country, and indeed internationally, in opposition to this trade agreement.

Let me remind members of the House why that is. It is because they all agree with New Democrats that there is a failure on labour rights protection and environment protection. The investor chapter should scare anybody who has taken even a moment to read the bill before the House today.

I cannot get into the minds of the Conservatives; I cannot explain their position to the member for Burnaby—New Westminster. But frankly I cannot explain the position of the official opposition on the bill either. It makes no sense. We should all be united in our opposition to Bill C-23.

I want to thank the member for Burnaby—New Westminster for his leadership in trying to persuade as many Canadians as possible to join us in this important cause of fighting for human rights, not just in Canada but around the globe.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, I understand that the member for Hamilton Mountain cannot get into the head of a Conservative MP, nor would she want to, and nor would any of us want to.

We have Conservatives who are purporting in their ridings locally that they are fighting against the drug trade and drug gangs in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, which has been particularly subject to the murders and violence that come with the drug trade. Yet they are endorsing an administration that was elected on drug trade money, an administration that according to the Defence Intelligence Agency was actually built on the backs of the drug trade.

How does the hon. member think the constituents of those Conservative MPs would react to that information?

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Madam Speaker, my constituents would react in the same way the constituents for Burnaby—New Westminster would. They would be shocked and outraged, and I think they would find the hypocrisy in the two positions unbelievable.

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This is a corrupt regime. Our government should have no truck nor trade with that regime, and all of us in the House need to stand up in opposition to this free trade agreement. New Democrats can be counted on, to a person, to oppose this deal. I only wish that members on the other sides of the House would join us in this fight.

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak about the important impact the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement would have, especially on the youngest citizens of that country.

In the speech preceding mine, the NDP said we should not enter into an agreement because violence is out of control. Its position is to develop an assessment.

Our position is to take action to advance the plight of the most vulnerable. We note that the Government of Colombia has taken steps that demonstrate a real effort to curb violence against workers; bring the people responsible for such crimes to justice; promote security, peace and human rights and establish the rule of law.

Nevertheless, children are still being hit hard by the ongoing conflict in Colombia. For the past 50 years Colombia has been experiencing an internal armed conflict involving the army, guerrilla groups and paramilitary organizations. For many Colombians this conflict has translated into decades of economic turbulence and poverty, constant risk of losing their homes and inequality and human rights abuses.

The most vulnerable often pay the highest price. The children and youth of Colombia pay the highest price. Not only are they subject to losing their homes and families, many live in remote rural areas with almost no social support. Young people are often the targets for sexual exploitation. Thousands of children have been taken from their families and forced into fighting as child soldiers. Approximately 11,000 children are recruited as child soldiers, sex slaves or spies. Twenty-five per cent of the people involved with the paramilitary organizations are under 18 years of age, and thousands of children are killed and maimed each year by small arms and land mines.

Children and youth make up 42% of Colombia's total population, but tragically they are also 57% of the country's poor. For these children economic growth represents hope for the future and a chance to come out of conflict, suffering and poverty.

Trade will produce the economy that will provide them with an education, sustainable livelihoods and the ability to contribute to their families and communities. It will give them the opportunity to rise out of the current tragedy and enjoy a better tomorrow.

That is why approving Canada's free trade agreement with Colombia is so important, not only to strengthen our existing trade relationship but to better the lives of Colombia's youngest generation. Our government recognizes that the future of Colombia hinges on its children growing up to be healthy, strong and active participants of society. The way to a brighter tomorrow is to free them from the current situation. Supporting economic development in Colombia will not only reduce poverty and inequality, it will also break the cycle of violence that has slowed Colombia's development.

It will prepare future generations to build a better society to call their own.

As a strong defender and advocate for children's rights, this government believes it is Canada's duty to help improve the lives of Colombia's youngest and most vulnerable: the children. We are working closely with Colombia to make that happen. Our government encourages peace and democracy, a stronger bilateral economic relationship, an open and frank dialogue on human rights, close co-operation on security and humanitarian issues, co-operating to keep drugs off our streets and cleaning up dangerous land mines in Colombia.

Canada is the biggest contributor to children's rights and protection in Colombia. Our government's international development programs are working with Colombians to protect children from violence, preventing the recruitment of child soldiers and helping them regain the place they can call home.

Over the last five years we have contributed over \$64 million to development programs in Colombia. Almost 25% went toward strengthening the rights of children and youth as well as projects to protect them from the aftermath of violence and conflict.

In May the Minister of International Cooperation announced our government's clear intention to place children and youth as one of our priorities for international aid. This is reflected in many of CIDA's bilateral development projects in which children and youth are a clear focus.

• (1600)

For example, together with PLAN International Canada, our government is developing ways to help prevent teenagers from being sucked into violence in Colombia and instead encourage them to become key participants in the conflict resolution process. We have contributed \$17 million over five years to UNICEF's program to bring education and humanitarian assistance to at-risk children in Colombia's 11 most vulnerable provinces.

We are also working with Save the Children Canada and the Norwegian Refugee Council on a program that delivers alternative education opportunities for out of school indigenous, Afro-Colombian, homeless and vulnerable children, youth and adults.

Through a local fund for children's rights and protection, our government is helping to increase the ability of Colombian officials to come through on commitments regarding the rights of children and increase the awareness of children's rights among the general public.

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The results of these programs speak for themselves. Recently our efforts on the ground prevented the recruitment of 15,000 children and youth into armed forces and assisted in the reintegration of 260 former child soldiers into their old home communities. Through our efforts, 70% of all demobilized children and youth will now receive enhanced health, education, protection and reintegration services.

More than 6,000 adolescents have developed skills to assist in conflict resolution as well as other life skills within their schools with the help of 400 peers trained as youth leaders. Under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1612, Canada encouraged the government of Colombia to establish the monitoring and reporting mechanism for children in armed conflict.

Our support led to the implementation of regional and national government policies and programs to protect the rights of children, youth and other vulnerable groups. More than 12,000 civil servants are trained in a new Colombian law on children and youth.

My fellow members in the House should be pleased to know that this government's programs are getting results at every stage, reversing the fortunes of children who have become involved in the conflict and preventing many others from sharing the same fate.

This government's programs support reintegration of demobilized children and youth through family reunions, education to allow them to catch up to the level of their peers, and job search skills that will help them take advantage of local employment opportunities.

Colombian children and youth are being shown how to lead more fulfilling lives so that they will not fall prey to the financial temptations of joining illegal armed groups and engaging in various illegal activities. Thousands of youth are trained in conflict resolution and taught how to take control of their futures. With improved access to formal and informal education and safe schools, they are able to grow within productive learning environments. And by working with the government of Colombia, Canada is helping to strengthen policies and programs and services that protect children and guarantee their rights.

Overall, I believe Canadians can be proud of the results we have already achieved through our development programs in cooperation with the government of Colombia and local Canadian NGOs and multilateral organizations. Where the NDP would stop this action, stop helping the disadvantaged, I am proud to stand here and say that the Canadian government on behalf of the people of Canada is working in all these productive ways. This bill is part of that resolution.

• (1605)

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am drawn to ask this question of the member because of the huge interest that he has taken with respect to economic development and trade ties not only with the Latin and South American countries but also with the countries of the Caribbean. The Prime Minister visited the CARICOM countries and talked about the kinds of issues that the member has addressed through his discussion of the bill before us.

Can the member outline for the House that there is a broader policy paradigm around which these free trade agreements are being developed? He has concentrated on the value added to children and

families in Colombia, but is the government working with labour organizations, trade organizations? He mentioned non-governmental organizations, which are extremely critical to effective reciprocal agreements under this free trade umbrella. Could he outline what the government's rationale is in general terms and what the specifics are with respect to working with trade organizations and labour organizations that are fundamental to the advantages and added value that he alluded to in his remarks?

• (1610)

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Madam Speaker, that was a very good question. I say it was a very good question because we have to take a look at each individual free trade agreement. In other words, in the case of Colombia, as I have outlined, because Colombia and Bolivia are two of our countries of focus in South America, some of the comments I made about this agreement are going to be different from comments that we would be making about a free trade agreement with another jurisdiction, another country.

However, in broad-brush terms, from my own personal experience, having had the responsibility and privilege of being the member of Parliament for Kootenay—Columbia for 16 years now, I can say that I have worked very closely with the trade organizations and have a tremendous amount of respect, and I know that our government has a tremendous amount of respect and wants to make sure that these are balanced agreements.

In the 10 minutes that I had, I focused my speech specifically on children and youth at risk. There are many other aspects to this. I am sure that when further comments are made by my colleagues about this agreement, they will be able to fill in some of the blanks. Suffice it to say that, yes, that is definitely a part of our consideration.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened to our Conservative colleague say that when we trade with a country and that country's revenues increase, ultimately the lives of people who face hunger or other problems are improved. I disagree, because often it is not the wealthiest countries that take the best care of their people.

How can we trust a country that is assassinating union members and displacing whole populations?

I travelled to Colombia and found that many people are being displaced from their farms so that certain mining companies can take over the land.

How can the government think that with increased revenues, this country will better redistribute wealth to the poor? I do not believe it.

I was looking at the statistics recently, and they show that—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I must interrupt the hon. member to give the Parliamentary Secretary a chance to respond.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary.

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Madam Speaker, I think if we take a look at the first comments I made in my speech, we will see that the Government of Canada believes the government of Colombia has taken real steps that demonstrate a real effort to curb violence against workers, bring justice to the people responsible for such crimes, promote security, peace and human rights, and establish the rule of law.

Is the job finished? No. It probably has a long way to go. Should we do what the NDP would do, just throw up our hands and leave them? No, I do not think so.

We are committed to working closely with the people of the Colombia as represented by their government to get this kind of an agreement moving forward so they can have useful, productive employment that they can go to so they can generate the wealth required to be able to do the things the member is referring to.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by pointing out that the House is currently debating an NDP subamendment to a previously proposed Bloc Québécois amendment.

The Bloc amendment referred to the Conservatives' disdain for the democratic process with respect to the review of this free trade agreement. We were in Colombia from May 11 to 14, 2008, where we met with people, groups, civilians, unions, business people and displaced people resettled in small towns. They all told us their stories. The subamendment conveys the Bloc Québécois and the NDP's opposition to this agreement, a position shared by human rights defence organizations.

The Conservatives, and even some Liberals, have said the most absurd things. Basically, they say that doing business with countries whose social conditions, labour conditions and environmental conditions are not up to par will automatically make things better. But it will be anything but automatic. In many cases, as in this free trade agreement, it is not about trade per se, but about protecting the investments of Canadian corporations, particularly mining corporations with underdeveloped senses of responsibility operating in those countries.

The parliamentary secretary for international trade recently said that about 100 Canadian mining companies are involved in some 200 projects, many of them in Colombia. Let us not forget that we have talked about social responsibility and mining companies right here in the House. There can be no doubt that most of the mining companies claiming to be Canadian are actually foreign companies operating through Canada because this country does not hold its mining companies accountable for their activities abroad. This free trade agreement is much more about protecting investments, and we all know that protecting investments, chapter 11 style, means placing companies' interests ahead of people's interests.

The Conservatives are saying that everyone agrees with this free trade agreement. Perhaps they are not following what is really going on. Just look at all the groups that oppose this free trade agreement. In Canada alone, many civil society associations oppose this agreement, including the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian

Council for International Cooperation, Amnesty International, the FTQ, Development and Peace, the Public Service Alliance, Lawyers Without Borders, communications unions, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the National Union of Public and General Employees.

Many stakeholders from Colombian civil society also oppose this agreement. Three of my Bloc Québécois colleagues and I met with the Coalition of Social Movements and Organizations of Colombia, a meeting that was arranged by that organization. I would remind the House that that organization is made up of the National Organization of Indigenous People in Colombia, the Popular Women's Organization, the National Agrarian Coordinator, Christians for Peace with Justice and Dignity, and the National Movement for Health and Social Security.

We were able to personally meet many stakeholders during our travels to Colombia in May 2008.

●(1615)

While we were in Colombia, the government said it had signed this agreement in principle with Colombia. We had not even completed our consultations. We had not yet submitted our report or made any recommendations, which were supported by the opposition parties and clearly said that an independent organization needed to be formed, one that would be able to assess any progress made over time in the area of human rights and able to say if there had been any real improvements significant enough to allow us to officially sign the free trade agreement.

The Liberals agreed. They have since changed their position. They are leaning more heavily in favour of economic development, perhaps to the detriment of other social, labour or environmental considerations.

Not everyone in Colombia is in favour of this. I mentioned the organizations from civil society. Some Colombian senators are also against this free trade agreement. Senator Robledo, among others, is against it. He says straight out that Colombia's experience so far with free trade has been damaging and has led to a greater concentration of wealth in the hands of the rich, the impoverishment of many Colombians, and the denationalization of the country. He says that its free trade agreement with the United States amounts to an imperialist re-colonization reminiscent of Colombia's historic relations with Spain.

He takes a similar view of the agreement between Canada and Colombia. In a CBC documentary broadcast in March 2008, Senator Robledo expressed his opposition to the free trade agreement, which in his view gives multinational corporations the same rights as Colombians, and even greater rights.

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He has also criticized some of the direct foreign investments in his country, including gold mines operated by Canadian corporations. In January 2009, he published an article on the behaviour of Colombia Goldfields, a Canadian transnational corporation that opened and then abandoned a mine in Marmato, Colombia. There is no need to tell the House that the environmental effects were still evident. So there was no corporate social responsibility.

This free trade agreement exists more, therefore, to protect corporate investments. The Conservatives have just told us that we had to get there first, before the United States, or we would lose market share. I do not know where they get their figures, because our trade with Colombia has increased. Since 1999, Colombia has become a larger trading partner, especially as a market for Canadian exports. Over five years, exports of Canadian goods to Colombia increased by an average of 18% a year, while the general average growth rate was 4.9%. Without a free trade agreement, merchants and business people are able to do well in Colombia on a company or individual basis, without affecting human rights, labour rights or environmental rights.

The Conservative member said that a lot of money was being invested. We know. The Conservative Party is greatly reducing our international aid, in Africa for example. It is turning to the South American countries and encouraging them to sign free trade agreements with Canada.

The Conservative government's position is therefore very self-interested. We should have proof of continual, lasting improvement. Last June at an international labour union conference, we were told that it was a snow job. The Colombian government has conducted a huge marketing campaign, probably with the indirect assistance of the Government of Canada, to give the impression that things are improving. Nothing is more misleading, though, than when they say here that the number of assassinations of union leaders has decreased.

•(1620)

I do not recall any such assassinations in Canada.

Even here though, as a result of the Conservatives' lack of effort, our social programs also leave something to be desired sometimes.

•(1625)

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure and an honour for me to rise in the House today to talk about the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

As previous government speakers have emphasized, it is an enormously important agreement for Canadian businesses and for investors alike. It opens up new doors and new opportunities for them during a very uncertain time in this global economy.

As was previously noted, trade and investment can help a nation such as Colombia move through troubled times and create new opportunities for people and communities to thrive and to prosper. At the same time, these nations look to countries like Canada for support in addressing a range of serious concerns that have a direct human impact.

Colombia is one of the oldest democracies in Latin America. It has a strong tradition of democratic institutions. Decades of internal conflict have put Colombia under severe pressure, but in recent years, personal security has definitely improved. Indeed, this is recognized by the global community and by international organizations present in Colombia.

Illegal armed groups, including paramilitaries and rebel groups, have been weakened. The formal demobilization of over 30,000 paramilitaries and the weakening of the two primary guerrilla groups are key developments in Colombia's efforts to break the cycle of violence.

Colombia has a justice and peace law that, although not perfect, provides a legal framework for truth, justice, and reparations. With the support of the international community, government authorities and civil society have undertaken a series of actions that contribute to a momentum towards truth, justice, the rule of law, and the fight against impunity.

It is vital for Canada and other countries to pursue policies of engagement and support for peace in Colombia. Canadians can be very proud of our role in assisting our Colombian partners along this path. Canada's engagement in Colombia includes support for Colombia's peace process, co-operation on land mine action and counter-narcotics, and assistance to address inequality, to reduce poverty, and to meet the needs of vulnerable populations.

In the last five years alone, Canada has disbursed more than \$64 million in Colombia through the Canadian International Development Agency. CIDA's projects on children and youth have allowed the development of policies and programs that take the rights of children and youth into consideration and help protect these children from violence. Projects have also prevented the recruitment of children into illegal armed groups and ensured their reintegration into their community.

As well, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada's global peace and security fund has disbursed \$14.5 million since 2006. We are also one of the largest supporters of the mission of the Organization of American States to support the peace process in Colombia.

This is critical work to support peace and to monitor the demobilization of illegal paramilitary groups in that country. This year, Canada is also contributing to an independent evaluation of this mission's work, to ensure it better fulfills its mandate and responds to newly emerging dynamics in Colombia.

Canada's global peace and security fund also provides vital support to protect the rights of vulnerable groups, including women, indigenous peoples, and Afro-Colombians. In addition, Canada actively engages multilaterally and bilaterally on human rights in Colombia, including through the United Nations Human Rights Council and the International Labour Organization in Geneva. Our statement on the UN Human Rights Council's universal periodic review process was very explicit in underlining the areas of progress and those areas where further work is required.

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Canada continues to be an active member of the Group of Twenty-Four, a group of countries that encourages and facilitates dialogue between the government of Colombia and international and national civil society organizations working in the country. Our embassy in Colombia has also been very active on many fronts to support efforts in that country for the promotion of human rights.

During my visit to Colombia in March, Canada and Colombia established formal, senior-level consultations on human rights. I am happy to say that a successful first round of these consultations took place in Bogota in July. These consultations allow for a further exchange of views on domestic human rights issues, as well as discussions on multilateral human rights initiatives.

• (1630)

For a country like Colombia, free trade can open up new avenues for success. It can create jobs in communities where opportunities now are scarce or nonexistent; it can provide a solid foundation for families to build for the future; and it offers an alternative to the protectionist, isolationist thinking that we see in some parts of the world that since the beginning of the economic downturn our Prime Minister has made clear is not the answer. This growth can help solidify efforts by the Government of Colombia to create a more prosperous, more equitable, and more secure democracy.

Rules-based trade can also contribute to a domestic environment where good governance, transparency, and the rule of law are respected.

In other words, we believe that economic opportunity goes hand in hand with democracy, peace, and security. In fact, under the leadership of the Right Hon. Stephen Harper, this balanced, responsible approach is guiding Canada's policy of engagement—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I would like to remind the hon. minister to refrain from mentioning the name of sitting members.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Absolutely. My apologies, Madam Speaker.

Under the leadership of our Prime Minister, this balanced, responsible approach is guiding Canada's policy of engagement with our many friends and partners throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

We firmly believe that economic opportunities can reinforce these objectives. That is why we are committed to being a helpful and open partner for nations throughout the hemisphere, with nations such as Colombia.

In many ways, when we look at this free trade agreement, we are looking at a lot more than lowering tariffs and providing investor protection. We are also clearing a path for prosperity and giving Canadians and Colombians alike new opportunities to prosper, improve their lives, and contribute to their communities.

Canada has always been a strong and active voice of global co-operation and the open-doors approach to international trade.

This free trade agreement would certainly benefit Canadian businesses and investors, but let us remember that it would also benefit Colombians. It would give them new opportunities to prosper and to thrive in the global economy. That is why I ask for the support

of all honourable members for the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the public who are watching this debate today, particularly the thousands of Canadians who have written to Conservatives and Liberals asking them not to do this appalling bad deal and try to force it through the House, can see a real shift in the Conservative approach. The Conservatives are now not talking about the trade deal, and of course, they cannot because the trade deal is so egregiously bad, but they are talking about the Canadian International Development Agency.

The NDP is on record as saying we need to increase funding to CIDA, because a lot of the programs it runs, including those in Colombia, help to benefit the Colombian population. It gets around what is an appalling corrupt and murderous regime.

The problem is the regime itself. The regime is not subject to rules. The regime has paramilitary ties. As the BBC recently exposed, and as Diego Murillo, the successor to Pablo Escobar in the Medellin cartel, stated quite recently, President Uribe's successful election campaign was funded with drug lord money. Uribe has very clear ties to murderous paramilitary thugs, including the AUC, which was born in his province, flourished and spread under his governorship, and led to the deaths of more than 100,000 Colombians.

How can that member stand in the House and defend the indefensible, a regime that has committed human rights violations and is tied to drug lords and murderous paramilitary thugs?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Madam Speaker, I do not where to start given the confection of anachronistic stereotypes, disinformation and gross inaccuracies. I will work backward from the accusations, which we heard earlier today, regarding the legitimacy and the courage of President Uribe whose government has been commended for significant progress over the past six years, both in terms of disbanding the paramilitaries and working toward reconciliation, despite the unhelpful performance of two neighbouring countries that provide sanctuary for terrorist groups and continue to displace innocent civilians and indigenous peoples.

I would suggest that the hon. member go to Colombia himself and acquaint himself —

• (1635)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** I've been. I've been.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Then the member was there with his eyes closed.

The member raised the matter of whether Canada was alone in this matter. I would ask the hon. member to ask why the European Free Trade Association, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein have conducted free trade negotiations with Colombia, as have the United States and the European Union. All of these countries are as sensitive as Canada is to issues of human rights and ethics in government.

I must say that the NDP is dealing with, as I said, stereotypes from the eighties.

*Government Orders*

I would also disagree with the point made by the member about thousands of letters protesting this agreement. In fact, when I was there, as were two other members, the member for Kings—Hants and the member Toronto Centre, we were impressed by the fact that the private sector unions welcomed this free trade agreement as a way of improving conditions for their workers, for the growth of their individual companies and for new opportunities.

I would also suggest, and I hesitate to do it while the member is not in the House, that a member of his own party, the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, travelled with me and I can tell the member that he was impressed from our meetings with civil society, with trade unions, with the church, with victims—

**Mr. Peter Julian:** He's going again.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Whether or not he—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order, please. I would ask members not to engage in debate directly. I will move to another quick question.

The hon. member for York South—Weston.

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member did not address it but I wonder if he would like to.

The concept of a rules-based trade agreement also has regional implications with respect to what is happening in Venezuela. I think that international peace is also a corollary to developing these kinds of rules-based trade agreements.

Is there hope that that kind of road would also follow a regional path that would be in the interest of international peace?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The minister for a very brief response.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Madam Speaker, I regret that I cannot give my hon. colleague the answer that his worthy question deserves. However, I can assure him that Canada is open to free trade discussions for foreign investment protection agreements with countries throughout our hemisphere. We do believe that by engaging we do have the ability to leverage—

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Winnipeg North, Aboriginal Affairs; the hon. member for Malpeque, Health.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to say hello to the people I represent in Terrebonne—Blainville and Ste-Anne-des-Plaines as Parliament resumes.

We are here today to discuss Bill C-23 at second reading. This bill concerns the implementation of the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

I would like to start by saying that the Bloc Québécois is opposed to this bill for various extremely important reasons.

When two countries sign a free trade agreement, it is because they are preferred trading partners and the volume of trade makes it worthwhile to reduce trade barriers. But the Colombian market is a small and not particularly lucrative market for Canada. Canada has limited trade with Colombia. Of course, we export western grain there, but when the whole world needs grain, we are not going to export the most grain to Colombia.

Colombian investment in Canada amounts to \$1 million, while Canadian investment in Colombia totals roughly \$1.058 billion, which can essentially be attributed to the extractive industry.

The Colombian subsoil is extremely rich. Ore and energy resources such as coal account for 31% of Canadian imports. Colombia is therefore extremely attractive to Canadian extractive companies. It is also rich in natural resources.

In concluding this free trade agreement, the government is motivated not by trade, but by investments and the mining sector. This agreement will make it easier to protect Canadian investments in Colombia.

The Bloc Québécois is not against protecting Canadian investments in another country, but we want the agreements protecting those investments to be fair and equitable and take into account the common good. This is not true of this Canada-Colombia agreement.

The current agreement contains many clauses based on chapter 11 of NAFTA. This chapter had favourable results at least a decade ago, but for some time now, it has been misused, because it allows foreign investors to turn to international courts when a country wants to amend and improve its laws.

It is also possible under chapter 11 to use the threat of court action to prevent a government from improving people's living conditions. Lawsuits can be for an unlimited amount.

First, Colombia is not on an equal footing with Canada in terms of living conditions. Second, the proposed agreement uses chapter 11 of NAFTA, a chapter that has been roundly criticized everywhere and poses problems everywhere.

● (1640)

As I was saying earlier, free trade agreements are generally signed by states with similar economies. The economies of Canada and Colombia are completely different. Colombia is an extremely poor country. It is estimated that 47% of the population was living below the poverty line in 2006.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, poverty is most prevalent in rural areas and affects 68% of the population. In addition, the current unemployment rate is one of the highest in Latin America. In view of this fact, what is the value of a free trade agreement that benefits mining companies and that will not necessarily improve the standard of living for the country's population given that they must work for the mining companies? We know what these companies do. I will come back to that later on.



Colombia has one of the worst human rights records in Latin America. In June 2009, witnesses appeared before the Standing Committee on International Trade and told us that the worst humanitarian crisis was unfolding in Colombia.

The impunity prevailing in Colombia has led human rights groups to believe that there is collusion between the Colombian political class and paramilitary groups.

Colombia is one of the worst places in the world when it comes to workers' rights. We know that union activists are assassinated and that thousands of people have disappeared. People are displaced because small farmers and miners sometimes own land that is coveted by big mining companies. In most cases, these people receive no compensation.

There is a great deal of opposition to this free trade agreement. Canadian civil society is opposed to this agreement, Colombian civil society is opposed to this agreement and many organizations in Quebec are also opposed to this agreement. A committee called the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive industry in Developing Countries was created in 2007. This committee made recommendations to the government. What did the government do? It rejected them outright. It did nothing and did not implement any of the roundtables' recommendations.

Recently, members of this House who sit on the Standing Committee on International Trade also wrote a report based on their deliberations, their trip to Colombia and their meetings with witnesses. This report reproduced some of the conclusions of the famous round tables.

What did the government do? It rejected the report out of hand and gave us a slap in the face, saying that it had signed this agreement and asked only that we vote for it. That is irresponsible, and it shows disrespect for the members who sit in this House and the companies that sounded the alarm and warned the government that the situation in Colombia was not exactly what the government thought.

But we know that this government protects major investors, and this agreement protects Canadian investors abroad who will not be punished for the crimes they commit against the Colombian people and Colombian companies.

• (1645)

For all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois will vote against this agreement and speak out publicly against it.

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on her speech. She cares deeply about human rights, and when it comes to foreign affairs, she puts a lot of emphasis on international development assistance.

Earlier, in my speech, I spoke about a Conservative member who mentioned that in Colombia, international assistance was very important, and was improving the situation in the country, and that this free trade agreement would make things even better.

Even when it comes to international assistance, Canada acts with its own interests in mind. Since there are not many investments or investors in Africa, Canada has taken this money and sent it to South

### *Government Orders*

American countries so that South American countries, Colombia in this case, will be tempted to sign such agreements, since the government is providing international assistance as well as protection for investors in Colombia.

I would like to know whether this is how my colleague sees this.

• (1650)

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Madam Speaker, I think that the government-supported relationship between international development and corporations is a bad one. Allow me to explain: twice during the time I was a member of the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Development, Canadian companies received funding through CIDA. They used money distributed through CIDA to get paramilitary staff on the company payroll. They gave CIDA money to military employees. That money was used to pay hired guns, not to help the people. I sure hope that CIDA has solved that problem, particularly with regard to TVI and TVI Pacific Inc.

According to the documents, there can be no doubt: at one point, CIDA disbursed \$14,000. That is not a lot of money here, but in Colombia, it might be worth \$100,000. TVI used that \$14,000 to pay professional soldiers to protect company assets and prevent people from using the only remaining source of drinking water because it had contaminated every other source around the site. That was an abominable practice that I hope is no longer happening.

Perhaps my colleague, who is a member of the Standing Committee on International Trade, who travelled to Colombia, and who hosted Colombian envoys, can tell us whether this is still going on or whether the government has put a stop to it.

[*English*]

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Madam Speaker, contrary to what the last questioner said, we have actually doubled our aid to Africa. We have not withdrawn money from Africa at all.

If Canadian civil society is arguing against the FTA, I am not hearing it, and the people in Edmonton Centre are certainly part of civil society.

My colleagues seem to suggest we should just do free trade agreements with comparable economies, but I would suggest there would not be that many free trade agreements we could pursue because most economies are not comparable to Canada.

Does my hon. colleague not think that trade and free trade agreements are a good opportunity to increase employment? She talked about concerns regarding employment and prosperity for the people of Colombia. Is giving them opportunities not a good way to increase employment and increase their prosperity?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member needs to review his notes. On the contrary, aid to Africa has been cut, but there have been some transfers. It may not look like it, but aid to Africa has been cut. I would like my hon. colleague to check his figures.

*Government Orders**[English]*

**Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Madam Speaker, as chair of the House of Commons international trade committee, I appreciate this opportunity to speak to the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. Despite what members may have just heard, it is an exciting agreement for many reasons, especially during this time of global economic uncertainty.

From the earliest days of this global crisis, our Conservative government's message has been clear. This is not the time to turn inward and protectionist; rather it is the time to open doors to cooperation with key partners around the world, partners like Colombia.

Through this free trade agreement, Canadian investors and businesses in a wide range of sectors stand to benefit from better access to the growing Colombian marketplace. While the agreement opens up a wide range of exciting new commercial possibilities for Canadian business and investors alike, it is significant for another reason as well. It includes a side agreement on the environment, an agreement that includes key provisions that will help ensure that our two countries pursue the highest possible levels of environmental protection as we intensify our commercial relationship.

Our Conservative government is committed to protecting the environment. It is a commitment we can see reflected in all our policies. Moreover, our government believes that trade liberalization and environmental protection can be, and indeed must be, mutually supportive goals. They go hand in hand. This agreement proves it.

Our environment agreement commits both parties to maintain the highest levels of environmental protection, and to effectively enforce domestic environmental laws. Our agreement reaffirms commitments our two nations made under the United Nations convention on biological diversity, a convention to strengthen biodiversity and to respect, preserve and maintain a traditional knowledge of indigenous communities in that respect.

Colombia has one of the most diverse biological resources of anywhere in the world. Canada is committed to working with our Colombian partners to help preserve these resources in a manner that takes into account the interests of indigenous peoples. We are also working closely with Colombia to help Colombia build new partnerships and promote best practices in environmental stewardship. Canada is a world leader in this regard.

As a member from Alberta, I can say that this is especially true in the resource sector when it comes to environmental stewardship and environmental impact assessments. We can offer a lot to our Colombian partners in terms of expertise and best practices. Indeed, Canadian companies are leaders in corporate social responsibility in minimizing the impact of their activities on the environment.

When the trade committee visited Colombia, we heard great praise for the corporate social responsibility of Canadian companies working in Colombia, companies like Petrobank, Nexen and Enbridge, for not just providing safe, secure jobs but investing in the Colombian people, in human rights training, social investments in health and education and in infrastructure. In fact, they are already a deep presence in Colombia, which not only speaks to corporate social responsibility and the economic opportunities of our relation-

ship, but also to our shared commitment to sustainable development and environmental responsibility.

We heard from dozens of witnesses, over and over, during the visit of the international trade committee to Colombia about the corporate social responsibility and leadership of Canadian companies, their treatment of workers and the benefits to their workers.

Once again, with the side agreement on labour, our goal is to ensure that our intensified relationship with Colombia is a responsible one for workers and also for the environment. As our government continues moving forward on opening doors for Canadian businesses abroad, including in markets like Colombia, we want to ensure that our presence is a positive and helpful one.

We believe that free trade can play a positive role around the world. The environmental agreement with Colombia is a great example and a clear indication of our government's principled approach to free trade and to our global partners.

I ask hon. members for their support of this agreement, of our many efforts to help Canada thrive through the global economy, and of our continued commitment to environmental sustainability and responsible business practices.

● (1655)

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I listened to the member, who is a past chair of the Standing Committee on the Environment. I am not surprised that his remarks were coming around to sustainable development and the tremendous concerns that have been expressed for biodiversity in the Amazon Basin and in various regions of Latin America and South America.

If we accept that the objectives as he has outlined in this agreement are worthy of signing, and while he has said that Canadian companies have been sensitive to their social responsibilities, there are many international companies that are not subscribing to those same values. What mechanisms exist in our international trade agreements and in this free trade agreement to make sure that the government of Colombia will be accountable to making sure those objectives he has talked about, and they are very worthy, are achieved?

● (1700)

**Mr. Lee Richardson:** Madam Speaker, first, one of the bases of this side agreement is the enforcement of environmental protection laws and rules and also made clear under the United Nations convention on biological diversity. These conditions, rules and regulations have been accepted by both parties to the agreement, broadly.

During the course of our debate in committee, we heard about the progress the Uribe government, which is six or seven years old, has made broadly in accepting this modernizing and reaching out to people to help them get out of poverty. This is just one of the reasons to diversify away from the drug climate and help to provide decent jobs to people so they can break the trend of having to work on drugs.

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One of the Canadian Wheat Board members appeared before the committee and said:

[A] Canada-Colombia free trade agreement would contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction in Colombia.

Reforms introduced over the past decade have served Colombians well.

As recently as 2006-07 the World Bank listed Colombia as one of the world's top ten economic reformers, not performers but reformers, and last year the economy grew by 6.5%. This is just part of how Colombia is getting control over the economy and helping the people.

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned that the side agreements will ensure the highest level in environmental standards for Colombia and Canada if we sign this agreement. Could he please advise the House what penalties could be imposed if Colombia or Canada does not meet the highest level in environmental standards?

Did the Government of Canada consult with Canada's first nations and environmental organizations prior to going to Colombia? In openness and transparency, did the government include them in its delegation?

**Mr. Lee Richardson:** Madam Speaker, I have been amused throughout the debate listening to the questions, comments and debate provided by the socialist party on my left.

We had these same arguments when we began the free trade discussions with the United States some 20 years ago, that we were going to lose jobs, lose our pensions, lose our water and become hewers of wood and drawers of water.

The facts are quite different from that. Canada is a leading performer in the G8. It has the highest employment generation in the G8 and the highest increase in values of exports to the U.S. This is what it has done for Canada. This is what it will also do for Colombia to help Colombians.

Dozens of witnesses across the demographic field in Canada and also in Colombia praised it. Certainly, we heard the disgruntled views of the socialists.

Sometimes I wish that more people in the country had an opportunity to listen to these debates, because if they listened to this stuff, they would know the dangers of a coalition with the socialists.

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I rise in the House to speak against this agreement. Having spent 35 years as an environmental professional, I feel it is my obligation to speak against it for the specific reason that our trade agreements in this country have regressed over the last 20 years.

Almost 20 years ago, we entered into the North American free trade agreement. Regrettably, at that time, environmental and labour issues were sidebarred. I would have hoped that two decades later, when we have a government that claims a strong commitment to environmental protection, human rights and labour standards, it would finally take the next step and actually put environmental protection and indigenous rights on the same level as investors' rights. Regrettably, the side agreement to the trade agreement with Colombia is a complete backward step from the agreement we at least had on the environment under NAFTA.

I looked with great interest at the side agreement. I think I am like anyone else in the House in considering it a privilege to work for the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation, which was established according to the side agreement to the NAFTA. I commend the governments at the time for coming forward with a very detailed side agreement, regardless of the fact that it was not binding, with penalties if the parties did not effectively enforce their environmental laws.

We see the opposite. We see complete regression in trade agreement after trade agreement that the current government has negotiated. It is embarrassing. We are supposed to be showing the best face for the environment and the way that development should occur. The government has stood in the House time after time, talking about its commitment to sustainable development, its commitment to address climate change and its commitment to environment. Yet here we have solid evidence in this free trade agreement. There is absolutely no commitment to real action on environment.

There are a lot of words. I looked at the agreement very carefully. At the very minimum, I would presume that we would take the agreement that was negotiated with the United States and Mexico and build on that. We have learned a lot in two decades. We have had many independent reviews of the work of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation. What has happened? We have thrown those learnings out and simply looked at this with blinders.

I ask a simple question for the member who spoke before me. What penalties will arise if either of the parties, Canada or Colombia, fail to implement strong environmental standards? There is absolutely no recourse. There are no penalties in the side agreement of the Colombia-Canada agreement. That is absolutely reprehensible.

I can go through every aspect of the agreement and indicate where it has failed most critically. Under the NAFTA side agreement, we form a commission similar to the European commission, a wonderful model that shows the government is genuinely committed to ensuring that we have sustainable development when we enter into trade with another country. There is no council. Under the agreement with Canada, the United States and Mexico, we establish a council of highest-level environment ministers.

Under the North American agreement for free trade, we also establish an independent secretariat, employing professionals from all three countries. We have no council or secretariat. Under the agreement with the United States and Mexico, there was at least an advisory council of representatives of business and the public to those three ministers. We have no such council under this agreement.

We are stepping backward very fast. The side agreement is basically non-existent. It is simply paper. There is nothing to it. There are vague references to corporate social responsibility. If a government manages to pass an environmental law, it should enforce it. However, there is no independent watchdog.

*Government Orders*

•(1705)

Unlike the North American agreement, where citizens of any of the three countries, Mexico, the United States or Canada, can file a complaint of failure to effectively enforce the law and that complaint will be reviewed by an independent secretariat and reported back to the council, there is no such independent review. It is to be undertaken by somebody within the bureaucracies of one of the two countries.

I fail to see any positive aspect to this agreement. I am looking forward to the government explaining to me what it sees wrong with the North American side agreements.

I know that over time the Government of Canada backed off on commitment to the North American agreement, which I find regrettable. It is a fantastic institution. I had the privilege of being the first head of law enforcement co-operation and as a result helped to form, with the enforcement agencies of Mexico, United States and Canada, the first regional network on effective environmental enforcement, two effective networks: one enforcement of wildlife laws and one for pollution control. There are no such measures under this side agreement.

Most important, the part of the NAFTA side agreement that the Government of Canada brags about time after time is the commitment to transparency and participation in law making. In the North American agreement every new law and policy must undergo advance scrutiny and participation. Under this agreement, there is no such provision.

I could go on and on about the failings of this agreement. I am frankly completely amazed. Given the expertise that we have under the Chilean agreement, under the North American agreement, why have we decided to be so regressive in environmental matters? When we are talking about a country like Colombia, a developing nation, we cannot divide environment from human rights. They are one and the same. Where we have a major development coming in that is displacing a community and in particular an indigenous community, we are talking about violations of human rights. It is absolutely critical that this be a solid, binding agreement and that we hold that country accountable if it does not live up to those obligations, particularly where there are Canadian investors.

I do not think it appropriate that the Government of Canada pass over that responsibility simply to a Canadian investor. Were I a Canadian investor I would not want to have to be fulfilling that complete role. It is the obligation of the parties to the agreement that should be ensuring that the trade is fair, sustainable and it observes our basic human rights and environmental protections, the very conditions and obligations commitments we have signed on to time after time with the United Nations.

The government should withdraw this agreement, go back and revisit it. Let us have the same kind of strong requirements that are in the North American agreement and let us step it up a notch. Let us ensure that we have very clear penalties if the governments of Colombia or Canada do not live up to their environmental obligations.

The environmental provision is very critical, but on the transparency and participation, we absolutely must improve the

provisions in this agreement, particularly given what we have heard in the House today and heard previously about what may or may not be going on Colombia. Absolutely we need to have an independent entity that is reviewing what is going on with environment.

•(1710)

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, having been a member of the trade committee and having taken a great deal of interest in this free trade agreement previously, I have appreciated hearing the commentary of the various members. Environmental issues were the primary area of discussion and question that I brought forward, including the CEC and the side agreements environmentally.

Has the member been listening to the people of Colombia? I was part of a delegation that went to Colombia with the trade committee. We met for extensive hours for many days with labour, social justice, the United Nations, environmental groups and individuals, indigenous communities, refugees as well as business and government representatives. I can assure the member that out of all of those meetings every time I posed the question of whether it would be better or worse for the people of Colombia to have a free trade agreement with Canada, with the exception of one meeting with one set of people, every other group said, "We would be better off with a free trade agreement". That includes the environmental groups.

Therefore, what would the member say to the environmental groups that were very clear with us that they believed the scrutiny, profile and investment that came with a free trade agreement would be better for them and their concerns and their constituents than not having that agreement?

•(1715)

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Madam Speaker, I have spoken clearly. I have worked for 35 years with organizations that represent indigenous peoples. I have worked with public interest environmental legal organizations in South America. They are asking for exactly what I am asking. It is not a question of whether there should be fair trade between countries. The point is they are that saying they would like to have the benefits that come with it. There are no benefits. There is no open right to scrutiny. There are no safeguards. There are no penalties to protect their interests in this agreement. Until those provisions are added in, we should not bring forward this agreement to be signed.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I beg to contradict the member for Vancouver Quadra. She obviously was not listening to the people in the labour movement, the people of human rights advocacy organizations and environmental organizations. Those who were not affiliated with the government in some way were very clear in saying that this was not in the interests of the Colombian people. That was very clear from the trade committee hearings.

*Government Orders*

The government threw up all kinds of consultants, people tied with the government formally or looking for other ties with the business community and the Colombian government, but the impartial observers, those who were on the Colombian scene were very clearly opposed to this agreement. I do not want the record to leave Canadians with a false impression of what the trade committee hearings in Colombia were like. It is exactly the opposite to what the member for Vancouver Quadra contended.

I have referenced the fact before that President Uribe has clear ties with the drug trade and was elected with drug trade money as the BBC reported. How does the member for Edmonton—Strathcona think that kind of tie would play with Albertans who, like everyone else, are opposed to any sort of privileged relationship with an administration that was built on the drug trade?

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Madam Speaker, actually that was one thing I immediately looked to the agreement, whether the provinces would be bound. I am proud to say my province was the first one to step up to the plate to sign on to the NAFTA side agreement on environment. I do not know what the position of the Alberta government is. I look forward to hearing what the government will tell us.

Most of the resource activity in mining, oil and gas is regulated by the provinces. I would like to learn from the government about what the position of the provinces is and what the position is on the adequacy of the side agreement on environment.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I wanted to participate in the debate, as many members have, simply because so many constituents have responded to Bill C-23 about the free trade deal with Colombia. I wanted to share with the House, though members have probably heard these arguments before, that the issue here for those who are opposed to this bill is human rights. That is the issue.

If I may put some context into the background, I have a letter which states:

Contrary to claims that “respect for human rights has improved under President Uribe” and that “engaging Colombia through free trade will give Canada more leverage to influence the Colombian Government in the area of human rights” the situation has not significantly improved and the premise that free trade will lead to greater influence is tenuous at best.

That is an interesting assessment. We have seen this before in discussions on trade arrangements with other countries. A number of members have raised labour law issues and the fact that labour leaders have been targeted. Indeed there have been some serious questions that have also been raised by the committee that studied this.

It would appear to me that the questions still have not been fully resolved. For that reason, I really believe that this bill is not being advanced by speculation about whether a side deal is as good as a clause in the agreement itself. One member referred to it being equally robust, and that is fine.

We have had experience in this before and the issue of side deals has come up many times before. That goes maybe to the heart of it. If the basis for the bill is that the side deal is going to provide the tools necessary to ensure that progress is being made on some of the issues of concern to many Canadians, it should be understood and accepted by virtually all who have the facts. That does not seem to

be the case in the House, and the issue of human rights has been raised.

The parliamentary committee recommendation was that the deal not proceed in its current form. A big part of that argument was because of the uncertainty and questionable assertions with regard to the human rights conditions in Colombia right now.

The letter states:

...international human rights organizations continue to denounce the daily horrors in Colombia.

I would think that the history of Colombia, in terms of the characterization of the problems that the country has, is generally known. It is a country in fact that has a population of some 46 million people. Its population is 50% larger than that of Canada, but our trade is about the same. We have a balanced trade position with them.

The assertion that somehow this trade deal is going to put us in a position where we will be able to influence the human rights situation of Colombia is, to me, a stretch. I think it is better that we are certainly at the table and able to demonstrate and work with the UN and other parties, but even the U.K. has recently backed off in its support for Colombia.

It is extremely important for the House to assess these questions and to make an informed decision not only on whether this is going to be an instrument that is going to provide the opportunity for an improved trade situation, because to the extent that Colombia enters into trade arrangements with other countries, there will be situations established in which Canadian exports will not be competitive, and we will lose the work.

● (1720)

Everybody wants Canada's economy to do better, but at what price? That is the question being asked by many members. What comes first, or can we have it both ways, and can we have assurances that somehow we can have a situation in which Canada, in fact, can play a meaningful role in improving the human rights situation in Colombia?

As I indicated, there are other countries that, as a consequence of the current facts in Colombia, are revoking their support for the Colombian regime. That is serious. The U.K. ended its military aid to Colombia because of the systemic crimes committed against the Colombian people. When the U.K. makes that kind of move, we have to question whether there is a fundamental soundness to the argument. This is not known and it is not accepted.

I do not have the other background material, but as I read through some of the other assertions, there is a reference to the practice by the Colombian army of dressing up thousands of murdered civilians as guerillas in the government's rush to show results in the country's conflict. That is very plausible. These are the kinds of things that happen in countries where there is oppression of other human beings.

*Government Orders*

Burma is another example, one that our colleague from the Yukon is very involved in. He has helped the House become more aware of the plight of civilians, and in this case labour leaders, who have been systemically dealt with in a way with which we would not want to be involved, quite frankly.

There is a question as to whether our investments in Colombia will contribute to improving human rights. That is a question. We say we hope it will. We hope it is because we are at the table, and we hope it is because we have the ability to communicate and discuss in a bilateral way some of these issues, but I am not sure whether Canada is in a position to tell another country what to do. I am not sure what influence Canada can bring.

Historically, Canada has had an excellent reputation for being a model of a proud, generous, tolerant nation that has a history of peacekeeping, conflict resolution and all those good things, but that reputation has been strained under the current government, quite frankly. There is the suggestion that we have to do this because Colombia is making deals with others. There has to be a balanced approach.

The assertions of the minister in his speech on May 25 painted quite a rosy picture about the significant progress that has been made. I have read about some of the allegations of complicity by some with the Colombian government and about the fact that there have been systemic murders of people. These are the kinds of things that make it absolutely necessary for us to have the necessary tools to have the influence we would like to have and still have this deal. I understand that trade is important, but at what price? The issue of side deals is also of concern to me.

Quite frankly, after listening to the debate today, I am of the view that this matter should go back to the committee. There are still some open questions and they are not going to be resolved by people asking their questions and giving their answers in this place without getting more facts or the facts. Somebody has to be accountable for this. It is time for Parliament to be accountable, and I believe that getting information and testimony from expert witnesses on the key questions raised by hon. members today will help this process enormously.

● (1725)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Madam Speaker, that was certainly by far the best speech I have heard from Liberals and Conservatives today. I thank the member for Mississauga South for bringing a voice of sanity to that corner of the House. His comments were extremely appropriate.

He talked about the fact that the United Kingdom has suspended its military programs with the Colombian military because of the widespread and persistent massacres and human rights violations taking place by the Colombian military.

The member spoke about there being nothing in this agreement that would actually reinforce human rights, but quite the contrary. The fact that the human rights situation is deteriorating in Colombia is something that should pull Liberals and Conservatives back from the brink.

My colleague did not mention the issue of the drug trade and the fact that the drug trade fuelled President Uribe's election, but that is

something we will be asking Conservatives about when they stand to speak in the House.

The member for Kings—Hants stood up and basically endorsed the government's position without even bothering to actually read the agreement. Does the member for Mississauga South feel that the Liberal caucus needs to have a real discussion about this so that Liberals who are opposed to this agreement can stand up and be counted as being for human rights and against this agreement?

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Madam Speaker, I read the speeches of all four of the parties on May 25. I can assure the member that if he looks at them he will see that those issues have been directly addressed by all of the parties. Those concerns are there and have been acknowledged. Even the minister acknowledged them. He did not duck the question of human rights.

It is the minister's view that there is a venue in which we can participate in a beneficial bilateral free trade arrangement with Colombia while at the same time introducing an element that would allow us to more fully participate in enhancing improvements in the human rights situation.

I cannot speak for the member for Kings—Hants but I think he would agree that the House should not proceed with the bill without getting the facts straight, and that may require sending it back to committee.

● (1730)

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member will know that there is a great concern among Canadians about corporate social responsibility. I am sure that he has been receiving lots of letters about the responsibility of Canadian corporations when operating in the extractive sector.

We have in this Colombia free trade agreement an opportunity to put Canadian companies to a world class standard of corporate social responsibility. This would ensure that when Canadian companies are operating in Colombia and elsewhere, they operate to the highest environmental standards, to the highest human rights standards, et cetera.

It seems to me that if Canada had a legislated corporate social responsibility standard for Canadian corporations operating abroad, a lot of legitimate concerns raised by folks would be somewhat alleviated. May I suggest Bill C-300? I would be interested in the hon. member's comments.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, the member has convinced the House many times over that for every complex problem there is a simple solution, and that is wrong. There has to be a comprehensive solution.

His private member's bill on corporate responsibility and saying that a company is going to qualify for aid and support from its own government if it is an ethical investor and does the rights things are really about rewarding good behaviour. I guess that is what we are always talking about.

*Government Orders*

This bill is troubling to me in a greater sense from the standpoint that we seem to be moving toward having one party saying that we have an opportunity for a trade deal that is going to be beneficial to Canadian business, and it is pretty convinced that the human rights things are going to improve, but they are not there yet. The arguments are not there. The evidence appears to be mounting that the human rights situation is not getting better, and that is what we have to deal with.

**Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak in the House today to the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

I would like to clear the air. The member for Burnaby—New Westminster has again been quite vocal with his wild accusations about President Uribe of Colombia. He has oft accused the president of being involved in the drug trade and of encouraging paramilitary action throughout Colombia. He accused him of murder and many other human rights violations.

In a very precedent-setting event, President Uribe of Colombia came to the international trade committee where he spent almost two hours answering questions from members of that committee. In particular, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster had a whole armoury of questions to ask the president and he asked them sometimes in a very rude and obnoxious manner. He accused the president of using drug money to get elected and he accused him of murder and other atrocities. Every time the President of Colombia answered him in a very direct and factual manner and refuted whatever the member for Burnaby—New Westminster had said.

What type of audience did the member for Burnaby—New Westminster give the President of Colombia when he was answering the questions that were posed to him? He ignored him and talked to his colleagues on the same side of the committee. He did not want to hear the responses from the President of Colombia because they were in opposition to his thoughts, his opinion and his philosophy. The fact is that it is probably more about a socialist in our Parliament having a diabolical philosophical direct opposite with the President of Colombia and his government. It is more about that than this free trade agreement which would help commerce between Colombia and Canada.

We need to remember one important thing. Those folks in the New Democratic Party should be ashamed of themselves for some of the things they have said. In the last election in Colombia, President Uribe, then candidate Uribe for president, and his party ran on a campaign that included free trade with Canada and other countries. They ran on a free trade policy and received a huge majority in their win.

Is that good enough for the NDP? No. A democratic event that takes place and elects a government is not good enough for the NDP members because they simply do not agree with that.

A question needs to be asked. Why are the NDP members so afraid of democracy? I say shame on them for trying to undermine a democratic event that took place in Colombia and which elected a president by due process, simply because they do not agree with the philosophy of that government. That is what it is all about.

The wild accusations by the member for Burnaby—New Westminster that go on and on forever, notwithstanding any responses, which he obviously does not hear at any time, are simply because of the NDP's fundamental opposition to the government and its philosophy.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** They're drug lords.

**Mr. Richard Harris:** Now he is calling the president a drug lord. Now is that not the most disrespectful thing we could ever hear? I congratulate the member for Burnaby—New Westminster for once again showing his complete lack of respect for the office of the President of Colombia.

I want to talk about this agreement. The previous government speaker outlined the various benefits of this agreement to a number of key Canadian sectors, from agriculture, to paper, to machinery.

I would like to take the opportunity to look at our relationship with Colombia through two different lenses, the lens of trade and services and the lens of investment. I will begin with the benefit of the free trade agreement to Canadian service providers.

• (1735)

As we know, our services sector plays a huge part in the engine that runs our economy: financial services, legal services, engineering, architecture, high technology, and the list goes on and on. In total it is responsible for 69% of our GDP and three in four Canadian jobs, something for which the NDP seems to think it is the champion. However, when we want to create Canadian jobs through free trade agreements, it is opposed to it. The NDP would shut down the softwood lumber agreement tomorrow if it had a chance.

One can imagine the rejoicing that would go on in the southeastern U.S. softwood lumber mills to not have a softwood lumber agreement. We can imagine the kind of tariffs, duties, penalties and fees that would be added on to Canadian lumber going into the States. That is what the NDP want. It wants to shut down free trade agreements, Canadian business and Canadian jobs, the same way it is threatening to shut down the economic stimulus package by voting against the government and calling for an election.

Where does the NDP stand? It is not the champion of Canadian workers. It is the champion of continuing the recession we are in. That is what the NDP is championing.

I am pleased to see that our free trade agreement with Colombia opens up many new doors for the Canadian services sector. Canadian service providers already have a substantial presence in the Colombia market, something the NDP does not recognize or would possibly like to shut down, which would mean the loss of more Canadian jobs. Our services export is in the area of about \$40 million to \$50 million a year. It is not small change. It is not our biggest export but it is part of our economy.

Driving these numbers are Canadian financial, mining, engineering and petroleum extraction sectors. Sectors like these stand to benefit greatly from the new free trade agreement and we will expand it. Our Canadian companies will do better. They will expand and create more jobs for this country and will help our economy. It is things like that that do not seem to be important to the NDP.

*Government Orders*

The agreement stands to give our Canadian companies greater access to the Colombian marketplace than ever before, creating jobs, expanding our Canadian businesses and growing our economy, things that are important to most Canadians but not the NDP. It also would give Canadian service providers an added measure of confidence. Under this agreement, they will enjoy a secure, predictable, transparent and rules-based trading environment.

Moreover, our two countries have agreed to begin discussions on mutual recognition agreements, starting with engineering, that would allow for standards and qualifications to be recognized in each other's countries. It would be pretty effective to have something like that brought in. This would save service providers in both nations time and money and would let them get to work more quickly in each other's markets, creating jobs, helping the Colombian economy and helping the Canadian economy. Does that matter to the NDP? I do not think so. The NDP is not happy when things are good and when the economy is buoyant.

The NDP cannot go and tickle the ears of those who are having a tough time in a poor economy and make them all kinds of promises that it cannot ever fulfill. It cannot do that when things are good. Therefore, it does not like buoyant economies, good economies and surpluses. It does not like business.

This free trade agreement with Colombia is one of many that we want to develop with South American countries. We are working with Peru, Brazil and Colombia. We will search out new opportunities with countries with which we can have free trade agreements because it is good for the Canadian economy and it is good for the Canadian workers. It is good for the economy of the countries with which we sign free trade agreements because it helps their country. It brings Canadian technology into a country that was maybe lacking that. Without a free trade agreement that technology would never go to Colombia, Peru or Brazil.

This is a good thing. I wish the NDP would get onboard like the members of the Liberal Party who sit on the international trade committee have gotten onboard.

• (1740)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since the member for Cariboo—Prince George took my name in vain throughout his entire speech, it is only fair that I get a rebuttal. That was from a member who never bothered to read the softwood sellout before he voted for it in the House that has cost hundreds of jobs in his riding, thousands of jobs across British Columbia and tens of thousands of jobs across the country. He says that is okay despite the fact that we now need to pay \$68 million in additional penalties. The penalties are imposed because of the softwood sellout, not because we might change or get rid of the softwood sellout. The penalties are in now and taxpayers are paying now.

However, I will come back to Canada-Colombia because that is the most important thing. The BBC reports that Diego Murillo, the successor to Pablo Escobar, said very clearly just four months ago that he contributed large sums of money to the campaign of President Uribe in 2002. This is someone who has also been connected with paramilitary organizations.

My question is very simple. The people of Cariboo—Prince George are honest, hard-working people who oppose the drug trade. Why does the member betray his constituents by endorsing an administration that was elected with drug lord money? This was reported by the British Broadcasting Corporation, the most respected news gathering organization in the world. How can he possibly justify links to drug lords that are tied to the administration and the ties to paramilitary organizations that have massacred 100,000 Colombians? Those are very simple questions.

• (1745)

**Mr. Richard Harris:** Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that I do not turn to the BBC every time I want to find something out or be informed of some information. The member for Burnaby—New Westminster posed that question directly to the President of Colombia when he was here. The President of Colombia answered it very clearly. Would that member accept that? Of course not. He would not accept that because he does not like the President of Colombia in the first place nor does he like the government. Therefore, no response that would show that the so-called BBC report was in error or that it did not have the information correct would satisfy him because he fundamentally does not like the government of Colombia nor the President of Colombia. That is my response to that question.

Just because he has gathered something from the BBC, which I do not know much about, maybe it is like the CBC, I do not know—

**Mr. Peter Julian:** *Washington Post*, tons of stuff.

**Mr. Richard Harris:** Mr. Speaker, he knows very well that the people of Cariboo—Prince George have been well-served by their member of Parliament for the last 16 years and 6 elections. They put a lot of trust in the things that I do in the House and the things that I say. I have thanked them in every election that they voted for me. The last time was a record number. The people of Prince George know where I stand on crime and punishment and the nonsense that the member for Burnaby—New Westminster has spoken about.

I must say that lot of people in Prince George and the central interior are working in the forest industry because of the softwood lumber agreement. If the NDP members had their way, every softwood lumber mill in the province would be shut down. No one would be working and there would not be a stick of lumber going south of the line at any price because the softwood lumber companies in southeastern U.S. would see to it that there were duties, tariffs and penalties imposed on every stick of lumber that went there. That would shut the industry down. Is that what they want? The industry supports the softwood lumber agreement. He does not. We are right. He is wrong.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my Bloc Québécois colleagues in saying that I do not support Bill C-23, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Colombia and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Colombia.



*Government Orders*

Knowing Colombia's current social situation in terms of human rights and politics, one can understand why the Bloc Québécois does not support the Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia. It is crucial that we analyze the impact and repercussions that the terms of this agreement will have on the people of Colombia, for there will be many. We must ensure that the rights of Colombians are respected and that their opinions will be taken into account before we ratify this agreement.

Civil society and the people of Colombia are opposed to a free trade agreement that enhances the rights of foreign investors and exporters, but does nothing to take into account local issues in terms of development and human rights. Yes, trade can support development and the realization of human rights, if it brings benefits to vulnerable populations and allows those states that are willing to promote development and protect the environment as well. At present, the uproar against this free trade agreement between Canada and Colombia is only growing in strength, in Canada and in Colombia.

According to the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, the Canadian Association of Labour Lawyers, the Canadian Labour Congress and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement and the two side agreements—one on labour rights and the other on the environment—will only exacerbate the problem of human rights violations, and the legislative provisions meant to guarantee those rights and protect the environment will not work.

We cannot enter into a free trade agreement with Colombia without looking at the human rights situation in that country. Under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to life, security of the person, freedom of expression and freedom of association. It is therefore incomprehensible that the Canadian government should ratify a free trade agreement, given the Colombian government's deplorable record of violating human and workers' rights and the thousands of assassinations of union delegates for which it is responsible.

I wonder whether the Canadian people, who consider themselves a democratic society and stand up for workers' rights, can sanction a free trade agreement with a country where people put their lives at risk just by demonstrating or wanting to join a union. It is regrettable that the Canadian government is supporting a regime that is heavily involved in human rights violations and mired in a huge political scandal because of its ties to paramilitary groups.

There seems to have been a major governance problem in Colombia and a questioning of the government's legitimacy since the parapolitics scandal broke in 2006. I am not here to judge Colombia's domestic politics, but we have to be honest. A number of politicians were arrested for having ties with the paramilitary forces responsible for carrying out thousands of assassinations, imposing a regime of terror and expropriating land. In addition, those responsible for the crimes against union officials and civilians are very seldom found guilty in court. Impunity remains in Colombia. Only 3% of the crimes committed led to a conviction.

In the meantime, the paramilitaries are reasserting control over the territory, and the government is doing nothing to stop them. Anti-

union culture prevails in Colombia, and human rights violations and violence towards unionized workers are common. This is a serious problem. It is very risky to be unionized in Colombia. Union members are terrorized, as are activists who are trying to form a union, to join one, or to engage in collective bargaining, taking part in labour disputes or fighting privatization. Since 1986, 2,690 union members have been killed in Colombia. This number increased by 18% in one year, going from 39 homicides in 2007 to 46 in 2008, not counting the activists who are threatened or kidnapped. Most assassinations are carried out by paramilitaries. Anti-union laws, along with the violence and terror, have helped keep the rate of unionization below 5%.

● (1750)

The serious human and labour rights violations are not the only problem in Colombia. The effects of the introduction of the extractive industry are damaging the way of life of Colombians and often forcing them to leave their land.

The free trade agreement has a chapter on investment. It tends to give greater protection to Canadian companies that invest in the mining sector and exploit resources. The Bloc Québécois worries that these investment protection measures give far more protection to Canadian investors than to the local population and the environment.

According to the CCIC, this chapter is nothing more than wishful thinking when it comes to corporate social responsibility. In fact, the provisions simply require companies to give it their best shot. They are purely voluntary and are absolutely impossible to enforce.

Extraction companies have a social responsibility toward the people of Colombia. Canadian investments in Colombia, which are primarily in the oil, gas and mining sectors, total \$3 billion, and will probably reach \$5 billion within two years.

Canadian mining companies have to be careful not to become complicit in human rights violations or cause forced displacement of any populations, since regions that are rich in minerals tend to become theatres of violence, paramilitary control and displacements. A few Colombians have been killed after they opposed the Colombian government's concessions to a Canadian industry to begin mining operations.

In Colombia's current environment, in which the state cannot seem to guarantee the security of its territory, the Colombian government and security forces are unlikely to be capable of maintaining proper control of the foreign companies that are exploiting resources there.

According to the KAIROS group, Mexico's experience with NAFTA demonstrates how free trade agreements favour corporations to the detriment of the rights of individuals and communities. Foreign investments based on NAFTA's chapter 11 rules often fail to recognize aboriginal peoples' right to be free, informed and willing participants in the activities that take place on their territory.

*Government Orders*

According to Amnesty International, over 60% of the three million displaced people in Colombia have been forced from their homes and lands in areas of mineral, agricultural or other economic importance.

The Bloc Québécois has always supported the adoption of mandatory standards and accountability measures with respect to the activities of mining companies abroad.

The Bloc Québécois agreed with the national roundtable advisory group when it called for the adoption of mandatory corporate social responsibility standards for mining companies operating abroad, for punitive measures for offending companies, and for the creation of an independent ombudsman to conduct impartial investigations to validate complaints.

However, the Minister of International Trade chose to reject most of the national roundtables' recommendations and implement voluntary standards. The Conservative government is not doing anything to compel Canadian companies to implement socially responsible practices when investing abroad.

In its June 2008 report to the House, the Standing Committee on International Trade recommended creating an independent organization to assess the impact on rights and the environment when negotiating economic agreements with countries at risk, like Colombia. But Canada carried out no such assessment. Or if it did, it did not make the results public.

The Bloc Québécois is open to trade, as long as it is fair. Trade agreements must include clauses mandating compliance with international standards for labour rights, human rights and the environment.

• (1755)

[*English*]

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the thoughtful remarks of the member who just spoke, unlike the member for Cariboo—Prince George whose ideological tirade appeared to have absolutely no concern for humanitarian or environmental issues in Colombia whatsoever, and also unlike the comments from the member for Burnaby—New Westminster who either has forgotten or is completely misrepresenting the testimony that I was present for during the visit of the international trade committee in the spring of 2008.

I will note that many of the witnesses were personally brought forward by the NDP and that member. We saw and heard from hundreds of people. With the exception of a very small handful of people, those witnesses acknowledged the serious shortcomings in Colombia regarding human rights, the environment, and security, yet confirmed their belief that this imperfect free trade agreement would be a benefit compared with no free trade agreement.

My question for the member would be, is the issue whether this is a perfect free trade agreement or not, and I agree with her that it is not, or that having this free trade agreement would be beneficial to the lives of Colombians compared with having no free trade agreement?

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question.

I would like to take this opportunity to say that we have to tell it like it is: Canada and Colombia are simply not major trading partners. One of Canada's primary exports is western grain, and we have no trouble finding takers for that, particularly during this time of economic crisis. Canada mainly exports cars and grain, which represented about 23% and 19%, respectively, of our 2007 exports.

The government's primary motivation for signing this free trade agreement is investment, not trade. Most Canadian investments in Colombia are in the mining industry. These industries typically operate in rural and remote regions, regions that contain most of the country's natural resources and where, coincidentally, there is the most violence. These regions have experienced 87% of all forced population displacements, 82% of all human rights and international humanitarian rights abuses, and 83% of all union leader assassinations.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for her speech. As usual, it was very incisive.

We know that first nations organizations, Colombian aboriginal groups, Afro-Colombians and women's groups are opposed to this free trade agreement for the simple fact that it contributes nothing to the well-being of these peoples. On the contrary, the violence experienced by these groups at the hands of paramilitary operatives is related to the fact that the latter can do whatever they want in order to take over the land of the indigenous peoples.

Does the member believe that it is mainly because of the reaction of first nations groups, women's groups, Afro-Colombian groups that all members in this House should oppose this agreement?

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Mr. Speaker, I would say to my NDP colleague that that is key. In light of the outcry, we have a moral duty, as the government, as elected members of this House, to scrap this agreement. Who has not met, in their office, NGOs and individuals who have spoken out against the violations of human rights that occur in Colombia?

In my opinion, the government should show moral responsibility before ratifying or adopting this agreement given that all opposition members are against it. We must ask ourselves if we can take a different approach to helping that country.

[*English*]

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement is not just an agreement with a country a great distance away; it is an issue that will make a very real difference to the people in my constituency, in the oil and gas industry and to my neighbours and friends who are farmers.

*Government Orders*

I have listened to members from the New Democratic Party in particular. I do not think they have spoken in favour of any free trade agreement, certainly not in the 16 years I have been here, and I do not expect they will start now. Members from the Bloc tend to oppose free trade as well.

However, I have been quite surprised by members of the Liberal Party speaking against this agreement, and for reasons I simply do not believe are legitimate. I think it shows they have not studied the agreement and they have not paid attention to the testimony presented at the international trade committee. That is a sad thing.

I have farmers in my neighbourhood, but also right across Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba who have just started a very late harvest. It has been a very small harvest in many parts of Alberta and western Saskatchewan. There was a terrible drought in those areas. The choices they have to market their goods makes a difference to them. If they have more choices, there is more demand as more markets are opened up and the prices tend to increase.

Particularly in a year like this where a drought has had such a negative impact, it is critical that they get every penny out of every bushel or tonne of the commodities they grow. For cattlemen this agreement could have a very important positive impact, and it is the same in many sectors.

I would encourage all members of the House when they are speaking about the bill to see it as something that does touch us directly, because it does touch me, my friends, my neighbours, farmers, people in the oil and gas sector and many other people in a very real way.

It also affects the people of Colombia in a very positive way. When we can have a win-win situation, why on earth would one be against the agreement? In sitting here listening to the debate today, quite frankly I am wondering how members of those parties can be against the agreement.

I would like to talk about some of the other things. The positives are easy to see: the new markets, the higher price for commodities are easy to see. This agreement demonstrates this government's commitment to help Canadians move through the economic times in the positive way I talked about, but it includes parallel agreements on labour cooperation and the environment as well.

I heard my colleague, the chair of the international trade committee, speak very eloquently earlier about how it will benefit the environment. I think that argument seemed to be well accepted by the House. In fact I do not believe I heard any argument against that. If I did, it was probably from the member who is against every aspect of the agreement it seems, but I do not remember hearing that.

I want to make the point that we have a strong and comprehensive labour cooperation agreement that will help improve labour standards for Colombian workers in many different sectors.

I have heard some hon. members raise concerns about the potential impact of free trade agreements on workers. It is an important concern for this government. Let me assure the House that this government believes that prosperity cannot come at the expense of workers' rights. We are simply not going there.

That is why the Canada-Colombia labour cooperation agreement is such an important part of the overall agreement. It commits both countries to ensuring that their laws respect the International Labour Organization's 1998 declaration on the fundamental principles and rights at work.

• (1805)

The International Labour Organization declaration covers a wide range of workers' rights and obligations, including the right to freedom of association, collective bargaining, the abolition of child labour, which is something we all work towards, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour and the elimination of discrimination in the workforce.

Our agreement with Colombia goes even further than the International Labour Organization declaration. It goes further in at least three ways. First, it commits both countries to provide acceptable protection for occupational health and safety. Second, migrant workers will now enjoy the same legal protection as nationals in terms of working conditions. That is more important in a world where workers move around more freely and more often. Third, it has minimum employment standards covering such things as minimum wages and overtime pay. However, as members can appreciate, these commitments are only as strong as the dispute resolution mechanisms and penalties backing them up.

We have a much more comprehensive agreement when it comes to labour, but it is critical and the agreement also focuses on enforcing those standards. That is why I am pleased that the agreement includes appropriate penalties for not living up to these commitments.

To ensure the highest possible compliance, the agreement provides for an open and transparent complaints and dispute resolution process. As part of this, members of the general public can submit complaints to either government concerning non-compliance of labour laws and the provisions under the ILO declaration.

If the matter cannot be resolved through this process, an independent panel review process kicks in that may require the offending country to pay up to \$15 million annually into a cooperation fund to be used to resolve the matter identified through the dispute resolution mechanism. Through the Canada-Colombia labour cooperation agreement, Canadians will have a unique tool at their disposal to ensure the Colombian government continues to demonstrate the political will and provide the necessary resources to improve the labour situation.

At the same time we clearly recognize the challenges that nations like Colombia face in complying with each standard set out in the agreement. It is difficult for us to meet these standards, but it is much more difficult for a country like Colombia, which is sincerely trying to move ahead to get away from some of the wrongs of the past.

*Government Orders*

That is why our agreement will be complemented with a \$1 million, labour-related technical cooperation agreement, which has started to implement projects in Colombia to promote and enforce internationally recognized labour standards, particularly in areas of labour inspection, tripartite consultation, and enforcement of labour rights and occupational safety and health, a program that will help Colombia enforce its domestic laws and meet very high standards established by this agreement.

Canada is committed to helping our Colombian partners make the most of our new free trade agreement. That includes ensuring better protection for Colombian workers, in particular trade unionists.

The Conservative government is re-engaging with our partners in the Americas and promoting the principles of sound governance, security and prosperity. This agreement helps add to that effort on our part.

I will conclude by reiterating that this agreement is important to me personally. It is important to my neighbours and friends, to farmers, people in the oil and gas industry and to many other Canadians across this country. It is not some idea that does not make a real impact.

•(1810)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the hon. member's presentation. Of course he would have more credibility on the agricultural file if his government were not seeking to actually undermine prices that farmers can get through the Canadian Wheat Board. If the government were not trying to undermine those prices, he would have credibility on the issue.

However, I do want to get back to the comments made by the member for Cariboo—Prince George. When I asked him about the links between President Uribe, highly documented by *The Washington Post*, the BBC and a lot of other organizations, and about drug lords such as Pablo Escobar, the member for Cariboo—Prince George said that it is okay because President Uribe said he was not guilty.

I would like to ask the member if he agrees with the member for Cariboo—Prince George that one can simply say, "I am not guilty", and that is enough, despite the preponderant level of evidence that is there from very reputable human rights organizations, journalists, et cetera.

Suppose somebody dealt in drugs in the member's riding or killed somebody, and the person just said that he or she was not guilty and got off scot-free. Would the member support the approach that a person could simply say that he or she is not guilty? Would that be good enough for a Conservative member?

•(1815)

**Mr. Leon Benoit:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the member brought this question up again, because I listened to his question to my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George and I heard what he gave as background for his question.

The expert he referred to was a drug lord himself who indicated that he had given money to Uribe. If I were balancing the testimony of the president against the testimony of a drug lord, I would tend to come down on the side of the president. The member can choose to

weigh his evidence in any way he sees fit, but I think he is wrong on this.

In terms of the issue he brought up about how I would deal with drug dealers, I would deal very toughly with them.

This will help move Colombia further along the path that it has started down. It has a long way to go, but it has made a lot of progress. It will help move it further down the path, where it relies less on the drug trade and more on trade in legitimate goods. That can only be good for the people of Colombia, and it can only be good for people right around the world.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, that certainly begs a response, because we have not just the testimony of one drug lord but evidence from a variety of sources, evidence that has been provided to members of the trade committee and information that is available to members of this House.

Therefore the question really is why the Conservatives did not bother to do their due diligence on this and see the many citations and evidence of the background of President Uribe, his rise in Medellin, his ties to Pablo Escobar as confirmed by the American government, and his more recent ties to drug lord money and paramilitary gangs.

The evidence is all there. It is just that no Conservative or Liberal member actually chose to do their due diligence and do their homework.

My question for the member, whom I like personally but with whom I disagree strongly on this issue, is why he did not do his due diligence. Why did he not actually look at the evidence? Why did he not go beyond the speaking notes that come from the Minister of International Trade which are clearly inadequate for what Canadians are calling for?

As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to go beyond the rhetoric of a president who says "I am not guilty" and find out the truth. Why did the Conservatives not do that?

**Mr. Leon Benoit:** Mr. Speaker, this government has been very careful and really diligent in looking at the exact information the member is talking about, and we have come to the conclusion, as have most people who have looked at this agreement, that this agreement will help move Colombia down the road to becoming more productive, with more law-abiding citizens within the country. It will be a positive thing for the people of Colombia, and it will be a positive thing for the people of Canada.

I think the member is wrong on this, quite frankly.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Stephen Colbert has a word for Republicans in the United States basically making up facts. The word he uses is "truthiness". What Colbert has said in *The Colbert Report* is, "Truthiness is just feeling something in the gut, rather than doing your due diligence and looking at your facts". That is what the NDP has actually done. It has looked at the facts and done its due diligence and not relied on truthiness, which is what we have seen from the Conservatives in this debate so far on Canada-Colombia.

*Government Orders*

I know many Canadians have written to the leader of the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister. Thousands of letters have gone to the Leader of the Opposition's office because so many Canadians deplore how the Liberals have sold out human rights on the issue of Canada-Colombia. Those thousands of Canadians have been watching the debate and what they have seen is one side simply presenting whatever emotional poll it has and another side presenting the facts.

Because the NDP effort is fact based, what I will do is talk about the facts of Colombia and this trade agreement. Hopefully I will have enough time, though not a lot of time, to talk a bit about the NDP approach on fair trade. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the NDP is the only party that actually does public consultations on trade policy.

We believe Canadians need to be engaged on trade issues. We believe Canadians actually need to discuss trade, that trade has implications and that bad trade policy can have as negative implications as good trade policy can have positive. Unfortunately, under the Liberals and Conservatives, we have seen very little good trade policy.

The first fact to talk about is what is actually happening in Colombia. The most important thing to look at is what has happened since these negotiations started with Canada-Colombia. What has happened over the last three years?

The Centre for Popular Education and Research, and that is citing a study rather than just saying things are better in Colombia, has shown that over the last three years there has been a marked increase in paramilitary killings, extrajudicial executions and the so-called false positives by the Colombian military. That has been cited. As we well know, the false positives are why the United Kingdom pulled out of its military arrangement with Colombia.

While the Canadian government is trying to push forward, other governments, like Norway and the United Kingdom, and even the U.S. Congress have pulled back. Obviously there is a problem.

The facts are the following. The number of trade unionists killed increased 18% from 2007 to 2008. It is up even higher this year. The number of disappearances has increased. The number of false positives, which is an innocent word that describes a horrible reality, has increased.

I will cite another source because it is important to get real facts out on the table, not just the emotions or the truthiness the Conservatives feel. I know they love President Uribe, but they cannot let their wild, whacky emotions, because he is an ideological soul brother, get in the way of the facts. The reality is that most people I know who even vote Conservative would be absolutely outraged with these ties with paramilitaries and the drug trade that has been fully documented.

Another fact is the comptroller general of Colombia mentioned recently that drug traffickers and paramilitaries now "own" almost half the agricultural land in Colombia. The concentration of land has intensified. Sixty-one per cent of agricultural land is now in the hands of 0.6% of the population.

We are trying to put in place a trade deal that enhances ownership rights of a very small proportion of the population. Changes in land

tenure law as well would mean that those who have been forced off the land by the paramilitaries and forced into communities like Soacha, which I visited along with the trade committee a year and a half ago, once they stay away from that land because of fear of death, they lose their ownership rights. There are four million displaced citizens, the largest forced migration on the planet, and our trade agreement would enhance the strategy of paramilitaries and drug lords to run these innocent, hard-working people off their land.

The other thing I want to address is the whole issue of what human rights organizations are actually saying. Organization after organization has denounced this agreement.

*Making a Bad Situation Worse: An Analysis of the Text of the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement* states:

Colombian civil society and human rights organizations have been clear: they do not want this agreement. President Barack Obama has indicated the United States will not proceed with their FTA with Colombia given continued and escalating violence against workers and the impunity with which these crimes are committed. What is Canada doing?

● (1820)

That was asked by an organization which is a coalition of national organizations.

Forever Solidarity: A Public Sector Trade Union Report on Colombia says: "Free trade will hurt, not help Colombians".

All of this is available to members of Parliament if they choose to do their due diligence, if they choose to do their homework.

One might say the situation has not improved in Colombia and is getting worse, statistically, by every measure. That is very clear. However, that individual might like President Uribe. I understand the Conservatives' love for President Uribe but let us look at the facts.

We have heard testimony about what President Uribe's career has been like. Again, all of this stuff is available to the public domain. The *Colombia Journal* mentions that young Uribe rose in Medellin, supported by Pablo Escobar. He was removed from office after only three months by a central government embarrassed by his public ties to the drug mafia. When he became governor later on security forces and paramilitary groups enjoyed immunity from prosecution under governor Uribe.

A document that was obtained through Access to Information put out by the Defense Intelligence Agency, and again available to members of Parliament, mentions in terms of the top 100 narco-traffickers Alvaro Uribe Velez, a Colombian politician. It states:

—senator dedicated to collaboration with the Medellin cartel at high government levels. Uribe was linked to a business involved in narcotics activities in the U.S. His father was murdered in Colombia...Uribe has worked for the Medellin cartel and is a close personal friend of Pablo Escobar Gaviria. He has participated in Escobar's political campaign to win the position of assistant parliamentarian.

That information was corroborated by other agencies in the U.S. When the information came out, the Bush administration tried to move into high damage control mode, but that information is publicly accessible.

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

Now we move to the current day. Since the last time we debated this issue, we heard the *BBC's* breaking news about Diego Murillo, talking about his substantial contributions to the campaign of Mr. Uribe in 2002. Diego Murillo was the successor of drug lord Pablo Escobar in the city of Medellín.

As the *Washington Post* reported, “Scandals surround Colombian Leader—Top Aides Suspected in Secret Police Case”. I am quoting now from the story on May 16:

For weeks after the news broke, Colombians knew only that the secret police had spied on Supreme Court judges, opposition politicians, activists and journalists. Suspicions swirled that the orders for the wiretapping, as well as general surveillance, had come from the presidential palace.

This is the situation that Colombia is in. The Conservatives want to give a privileged trading relationship to this president and his administration. This is someone whose political career was tied to drug lords and later on tied to murderous paramilitary thugs who are responsible for the deaths of up to 100,000 people.

Any voters, whether they voted NDP, Bloc, Liberal or Conservative, who have the ability to look at both sides of this issue, would say in the case of that extreme violence, in the case of the impunity with which these crimes have been committed, that we should not give a privileged relationship to an administration that has very clearly fallen short of the fundamental norms and values that Canadians hold. I do not think any Conservative could go back to his or her riding and defend ties to an administration that was elected with drug lord money and has ties with paramilitary thugs. That is why the NDP is opposing this trade agreement.

What are we putting forward? We are saying quite simply that fair trade, something we favour, has to be built on a series of values. We have to respect democracy, respect the environment. We have to look at a fair trade approach that builds social, environmental and labour standards. This is what we put forward.

● (1825)

We also believe in doing our homework on every trade deal, whether it is the softwood sellout, the shipbuilding sellout or this sellout of human rights. We have analyzed and actually looked at the impacts, and that is why we have been able to speak up with such authority. Most Canadians agree and want to see this deal stopped.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

● (1830)

[*English*]

### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to raise an issue in the House following a question I asked in April of this year regarding a tragic situation in an aboriginal community in Manitoba.

The question I asked originated with the very tragic death of Chace Barkman, one of twin babies from the remote Garden Hill First Nation in Manitoba. The twin babies were medevaced to

Winnipeg to undergo emergency treatment for meningitis that went undetected at their local nursing station. One of those twins, Chace, died. As a result, our eyes and ears and minds are focused on what Parliament and the Government of Canada need to do to ensure that a death like this never happens again.

Unfortunately, the statistics coming out of first nations communities are so overwhelmingly negative that we do not have much hope that this situation can be turned around anytime soon. The government has failed in fact to take concrete steps to deal with the tragic circumstances facing children and all residents in first nations and Inuit communities across this land.

We have had our own studies. One done in March of this year, which should have alerted the government to the problems at hand, was entitled “Indigenous Children’s Health Report: Health Assessment in Action”. It showed, as many other studies have done, that children on reserve were far more likely to suffer chronic diseases, 14% of on-reserve children had asthma, and the list goes on. We have our studies, yet they do not seem to make a difference.

We turned to international bodies for their glimpse of what is happening in our country. The results are staggering. Let me just refer to the UNICEF report, a very recent report from 2009, that states the following:

The fact is, the numbers just don’t add up. In almost any measure of health and wellbeing, Aboriginal children – including First Nations, Inuit and Métis – are at least two or three times worse off than other Canadian children. As children, they are less likely to see a doctor. As teens, they are more likely to become pregnant. And in many communities, they are more likely to commit suicide. The result is a generation of children whose health and well-being is unjustly compromised.

Let us also remember that UNESCO has done a similar report suggesting that aboriginal children are among the most marginalized in Canadian society and despite some advances in almost every measure of health and well-being, aboriginal children, including first nations, Inuit and Métis, are at least two or three times worse off than any other Canadian children.

Is that not enough for action? Today, we have seen nothing from the government. In fact the whole landscape around the pandemic of H1N1 has only put further attention on the failure of the government to take action and do what is necessary in terms of an area where it has jurisdiction, where the federal government is ultimately responsible.

At the time of the tragic death of Chace Barkman—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member’s time has expired. I will have to go to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to providing quality health care services to first nation communities, including Garden Hill. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family following the illness of their children and the loss of their son.

The government is committed to addressing the broader health issues for all Canadians and to continue working with first nation communities to attend to the determinants of health of its first peoples.

Patient confidentiality prevents me from talking specifics of this case. All complaints regarding client care are reviewed by Health Canada medical staff. Health Canada also offers continued support and to debrief the family following completion of reviews.

Health Canada invests over \$2.1 billion nationally for health services to first nations and Inuit. Budget 2009 commits \$305 million over the next two years to strengthen current programs and improve health outcomes. This will be supported by an additional \$135 million that will go towards health services infrastructure, including health clinics and nursing stations. This funding was announced in Winnipeg on September 1.

In Manitoba, Health Canada's first nation and Inuit health branch has an annual operating budget of approximately \$350 million. Health Canada also provides first nations people living on or off reserve with health benefits not insured by provincial health care.

The provision of health services is a shared responsibility between federal and provincial governments. Primary care, including nursing, physician services and allied health can be accessed through federal nursing stations.

Health Canada works in coordination with the Province of Manitoba to provide physician services to a number of first nation communities, including Garden Hill. On-site physicians are provided in communities on an itinerant basis; however, the nurses are able to consult with a physician as required on a 24/7 basis.

Health Canada employs nurses to work in first nation communities across northern Manitoba. These health care professionals are committed to providing quality health care and have developed strong working relationships with their communities.

The Garden Hill First Nation is served by a recently built nursing station. Community health nurses working at Garden Hill are available on a 24/7 basis. On average, there are six to seven nurses on-site at the nursing station.

On April 16 of this year, Health Canada officials travelled to Garden Hill to hear the concerns of community leadership first-hand. In addition, officials continue to travel regularly to Garden Hill First Nation to meet with community leadership and staff. During these meetings, Health Canada officials hear the community's concerns and work collaboratively toward resolution of issues.

The nursing stations provide primary care, public health and basic emergency services. Clients requiring additional care are transferred to a hospital via medical evacuation following consultation with a physician.

This Conservative government is committed to improving the health of first nations and Inuit across the country, as evidenced by our budget 2009 commitment of \$440 million over the next two years.

We will continue to work with the Garden Hill First Nation community, the immediate family, and first nation communities across this country to support them in times of crisis and to work with them to maintain and enhance individual, family and community wellness.

● (1835)

**Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, I think the parliamentary secretary fails to recognize that, in fact, the nursing station at Garden Hill is, as has been described by others, of World War II vintage. There is no permanent doctor on-site. The nurses do the best they can, but in fact the current government has not lived up to its responsibility to ensure that every child in this country is treated equally, regardless of where they live, regardless of their economic circumstances.

We know the social determinants of ill health are poverty, lack of housing, lack of access to education, and the list goes on. What has the government done in terms of meeting those needs?

I would suggest that one example of just how little the government has done is to look at H1N1 as a case study and realize how many first nation communities like Garden Hill have been knocking at the door of the government saying, "Why don't you recognize that the circumstances we are faced with are creating a much more serious outbreak of H1N1 pandemic and we turn to you, government, to help us deal with them?"

Why does the government not—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. parliamentary secretary.

● (1840)

**Mr. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I will remind the member that the Garden Hill First Nation is served by a recently built nursing station, with community nurses working on a 24/7 basis. On average, there are six to seven nurses on-site at the nursing station.

The Conservative government is committed to supporting and strengthening health care for Canada's first nations and Inuit. It is an issue that the Prime Minister and this government take very seriously, and this government has acted.

That is why in budget 2009 we provided \$305 million over the next two years to improve health outcomes and strengthen current programs. As well, we recently announced an additional \$135 million for improving health services infrastructure.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

## HEALTH

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on April 20, I asked two questions to the government concerning the criticism of the Ontario chief medical officer of health, who in the report his office released stated clearly that the federal government, specifically this minister given the responsibility for food safety, had failed Canadians during the listeriosis crisis of 2008, which resulted in the deaths of 22 people.

The questions raised in April have yet to be answered. The only recourse to the government's refusal to respond to serious concerns is for there to be a full inquiry under the federal Inquiries Act. The Conservatives on the agriculture committee, and indeed the government itself, refuse to allow a full public inquiry to occur. They used a parliamentary manoeuvre, leaving the impression of a reversal of a majority vote of the agriculture committee calling for a full public inquiry.

This manipulated majority does not reflect the true majority on the committee. In fact, the original report of the subcommittee calling for a full public inquiry after months of hearings still stands, but we have yet to hear the government response on that report.

The fact that the government went to such lengths to manipulate an outcome tells us more about the Conservatives' desperate determination to avoid a full public inquiry. The question is, why? What is the government really afraid of?

There would appear to be a number of reasons.

Remember that this is a government that called a full public inquiry into the Mulroney-Schreiber affair, in which a former prime minister is alleged to have taken money from a German businessman two decades ago. No one was injured. No one died. That full public inquiry is into the possible sleazy activities of a Conservative prime minister.

Last Friday the government issued its response to the listeriosis crisis by implementing the Weatherill report. While the official opposition has indicated that a number of recommendations in the Weatherill report are worthy of consideration, the statement of the government reinforces the need for a full public inquiry.

For example, in the Weatherill report, Ms. Weatherill claims that it will take a third-party auditor to find out the numbers of inspectors.

On July 21, the minister said it was impossible to determine how many meat inspectors there are. That is interesting, considering that the CFIA told the subcommittee on April 20, 2009, that there were 1,467 meat inspectors. On May 14, the minister told the House that half of the 3,228 inspectors were involved in meat inspection.

So who misled with Ms. Weatherill: the minister, the CFIA, or both?

I guess it is simple. The fact is that the government does not have the numbers right and cannot report to Parliament in a direct fashion.

On another matter, I asked the government in April why it did not take action when it was first notified of the crisis on July 29, 2008, yet CFIA claims they were informed only on August 6. Testimony before committee showed that those were the facts as alleged by the Ontario ministry, yet it is not even mentioned in the Weatherill

report. Why? If it was before our committee, why the discrepancies in the two committee reports?

In closing, the bottom line is that there are all kinds of areas where there are discrepancies. Why is the government avoiding a public inquiry?

• (1845)

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, regarding a public inquiry, I was there. I sit on the agriculture committee and I also participated in the food safety subcommittee.

After hours and hours of testimony by a myriad of witnesses, not a single witness called for a public inquiry except for one, a very Liberal-friendly witness, one who has donated financially to the campaigns of the Liberal member in particular. That is important to note.

Yes, the food subcommittee did include a request to have a public inquiry in the report but that is only because the opposition are numerically superior on the subcommittee and on the main agriculture committee. That is why the recommendation was there.

The opposition called for a full meeting by the agriculture committee this summer. We did meet this summer. Another point regarding this meeting is that when the first report was released that finding was rammed through by the opposition before it had seen the independent report released by Ms. Sheila Weatherill.

When the opposition called for an additional meeting this summer, we and the opposition had an opportunity to look at the recommendations put forward by Ms. Weatherill as the independent investigator. Once the committee took into account what was in her report, all of the lessons learned report, all of the testimony that we heard in both the subcommittee and in the main committee, the committee passed a motion that a full public inquiry was definitely not necessary. In fact, that decision is being reported to the House.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary's initial remarks on who requested a public inquiry at committee leaves one wondering if he is really following the Prime Minister's advice that "we'll teach them a lesson". Is there a black list that the Conservative members seem to be following of who they check out? I do not know how they check them out. How do we know if they donated money to the Liberal Party or not?

The fact is that people have a right to come before the committee and, if they so decide based on evidence, call for a public inquiry. That is what they did and that is what we supported.



*Adjournment Proceedings*

On this point, the University of Manitoba food microbiologist, Rick Holley, a member of the academic advisory panel on food safety at the inspection agency said that lack of knowledge about food-borne illness, how it happens and its cost to society in terms of death and illness is a weak spot in the Canadian food safety system that none of the recommendations of the Weatherill report addressed adequately. He basically calls for more work to be done and that there should be a full public inquiry—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, the witness himself admitted to his leanings toward the Liberal Party and his financial donations. There is no black list. The witness himself said that in front of committee.

Our Conservative government responded quickly, professionally, tirelessly and effectively with its partners during the outbreak investigation and the subject of the recall process related to

listeriosis. We do recognize that there are areas where we can improve and we are acting on these.

We are moving ahead on all 57 recommendations made by the independent investigator, Ms. Sheila Weatherill, who was commended by the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food for her excellent in-depth investigation. We are making \$75 million available over the next three years to immediately begin implementing these recommendations. Actions will focus on prevention, surveillance, detection and better response, including the hiring of 166 food safety staff, which includes the training of 70 new front line inspectors of ready-to-eat—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 6:49 p.m.)

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