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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, December 13, 2010**  
**(Part A)**

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Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

## **CONTENTS**

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

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 13, 2010

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1105)

[*English*]

### CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from November 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-510, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (coercion), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** When this matter was last before the House, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar had the floor, and there are five minutes remaining in the time allotted for her remarks. I therefore call upon the hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar.

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since I stood in the House last month to speak in support of Roxanne's Law, I have heard from countless Canadians across the country, especially women, expressing their strong support for the bill, which would give Canadian women much needed protection against unwanted abortions.

The evidence completely dispels the notion expressed last month in this chamber that women do not want this protection. Nothing I have seen, heard or read could be further from the truth.

The sad reality is that abortion coercion does take place in Canada. We all know about Roxanne Fernando who was murdered by the father of her unborn child after refusing to end her pregnancy. A recent case involving abortion coercion in Calgary also had a fatal outcome. Melinda Morin was convicted of manslaughter for killing her boyfriend in a fit of rage after he attacked her during an argument about her pregnancy. He wanted her to have an abortion but she refused.

Those two examples tell us that if a woman is feeling threatened into an unwanted abortion, she may be either the victim or the perpetrator of violence. Both are extreme and tragic examples of what can happen when others try to impose unwanted abortions on pregnant women. I am certainly not saying that all cases involving abortion coercion will end in violence but those stories do illustrate this tragic and deadly outcome that can result when we, as a society,

do not take abortion coercion seriously and when we do not condemn it loudly and clearly, as Roxanne's Law would surely do.

While most cases of abortion coercion do not end in the death of either the pregnant woman or the person who is pressuring them to terminate their pregnancy, any successful attempt at abortion coercion will always result in the death of that woman's wanted unborn child. Turning a blind eye to this reality violates Canadians' high standards of justice and human rights. It is no wonder our own refugee board has called forced and coerced abortion a crime against humanity.

Some women in Canada are forced to abort when the fetus is female. The practice of aborting baby girls has been strongly condemned by UNICEF and various medical organizations, including the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada. A UN rep in 2005 said about this practice:

It is fundamentally wrong, morally wrong, socially wrong and developmentally wrong to tolerate, stand and watch such acts of sex selection and violence against girls.

It was also strongly denounced by the member for Vancouver South, a former Liberal health minister, who wrote in April 2008 in the *Ottawa Citizen*:

Sex selection for the purpose of committing female feticide is one of the most heinous acts of violence and hatred inflicted on women.

A report in October 2009 in the *Toronto Star*, highlighted the case of one pregnant woman who sought help from a community health centre that serves the community that has a preference for male children. The woman was pregnant for the third time with a female child. Her family forced her to abort her two previous pregnancies because they did not want girl babies. She was hoping to save the third female child. However, the centre lost contact with the woman for a period of time and, when they did manage to contact her again, the woman said that she had a miscarriage.

We need to send the message loudly and clearly that forcing and coercing women to abort their children is not acceptable behaviour. We need to promote a culture of respect for women who make the choice to be mothers. We need to give Canadian women the assurance that the law will be there to protect them when they take on the monumental responsibility of bringing children into the world.

There is no question that Roxanne's Law would do all those things. A vote against Roxanne's Law, on the other hand, will appear as a vote in favour of continuing the oppression and degradation of women and girls, including those still in the womb.

*Private Members' Business*

[*Translation*]

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we have a tendency to recite the long list of the Conservative government's faults. But upon reading Bill C-510, I finally found something positive: this government is inventive.

Its dedication to limiting a woman's right to choose regarding abortion fascinates me. We thought it had tried everything, particularly with Bill C-484 on unborn children and its regressive international policy on maternal health. The cuts to Status of Women Canada, the court challenges program and the women's program are just more examples.

Although their actions show that they want to criminalize abortion and set back women's rights, the Conservatives keep repeating that they do not want to reopen the debate. But they are the ones who keep bringing this issue back to the House.

This time, with Bill C-510, An Act to Prevent Coercion of Pregnant Women to Abort, the government wants to impose five-year prison sentences for anyone who coerces a woman to have an abortion and two-year prison sentences for anyone who attempts to coerce a woman to have an abortion.

The Conservatives are using the case of Roxanne Fernando, who was killed by three men, to misrepresent things. The crown prosecutor, one of the murderers and his lawyer have all stated that the murder had nothing whatsoever to do with the woman's refusal to have an abortion. The Conservatives are using this barbaric act to threaten the right to abortion, even if this right was not the issue. This was a case of domestic violence.

With Bill C-510, the Conservatives are moving forward with their right-wing political agenda instead of attacking the real problem, which is violence against women. The real solutions are based on achieving equality between men and women. This has to do with better access to the justice system through legal aid, financial assistance for victims of crime and their loved ones, pay equity and other improvements to social programs.

In addition to being so creative, the Conservatives also have a talent for bringing women's rights groups together. The Fédération des femmes du Québec is opposed to passing Bill C-510. It has declared that since the Conservatives took power, "abortion has never been so threatened".

The Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances has also spoken out against Bill C-510. The federation expects the bill to have a number of negative consequences, one of which is that it will open the door to the criminalization of abortion. The federation also fears, with good reason, that workers in this area could be prosecuted if the bill is passed. The very vague concept of "coercion" would give the unborn child certain rights to the woman's detriment.

For these same reasons, a number of other organizations, including Canadians for Choice, are strongly opposed to the initiative of the hon. member for Winnipeg South.

At the very least, it can be said that the Conservatives do not give up. Since coming to power, they have tried every sly tactic they can think of to reopen the debate on abortion, but have been

unsuccessful. On September 2, 2010, the infamous Dimitri Soudas stated that his party did not want to reopen the debate on this issue. Since that time, several members have made similar statements. Nevertheless, last May, the hon. member for Winnipeg South said that it is "always important to take steps, small steps, to acknowledge the value of the unborn". Finally, a Conservative member who is willing to tell the truth about his intentions.

Twenty-two years ago, the Supreme Court invalidated the anti-abortion provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada. Since that time, there has been a strong consensus in our society that the debate on this issue should be over. However, from time to time, the Conservative Prime Minister agrees to reward the most well-behaved radicals in his party by letting them introduce regressive bills. Each time, the members of the House oppose these bills, with the exception of the Conservatives and a few misguided Liberals.

● (1110)

But that does not matter. Listening to the peoples' representatives in Parliament is not an option for this government. Not only is Bill C-510 downright disgraceful, it is also useless.

Counsellors at abortion clinics already screen women to ensure that they have not been coerced into abortion. Clinics refuse to perform abortions on women who are not sure of their decision or who are being coerced by a third party. In addition, the Criminal Code prohibits threats and assaults against women. That is why the criminals who murdered Roxanne Fernando are in prison. Nathanael Plourde was sentenced to 25 years in prison, and Manuel Toruno was sentenced to at least 10 years in prison. Their 17-year-old accomplice was given the maximum sentence for a minor: six years in prison and four years of probation. The maximum prison sentences proposed by this bill, five years and two years, are totally absurd and useless.

A woman's decision to abort is rarely made alone, although it is a decision that must clearly be made without any persuasion. As I just said, such coercion is already prohibited by the Criminal Code. However, it is normal for an adolescent or a woman to seek advice from those close to her. If this person's mother, father, brother, sister or partner counsels her not to keep the baby, the bill is so vague that the pregnant woman's family could be subject to jail time. That is completely unacceptable.

Bill C-510 is also condescending towards women. It suggests that they are often coerced into abortion and that they cannot make the decision on their own. But women are free to make that choice and they must continue to be free.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that my political party and I are fiercely opposed to this bill. As a woman and a mother, I am personally insulted by these dangerous measures that restrict freedom of choice regarding abortion. In the name of women's right and freedoms, I ask all members to oppose it.

● (1115)

[*English*]

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak in this important debate today.

As the youngest woman in the House of Commons, I do not believe we would be discussing a bill in 2010 that would seek to take away the rights for which women before me have fought so hard. While the bill claims to react to a tragic situation around coercion and the discussion of abortion, it is an attack on a woman's right to choose.

The bill is mostly redundant because threats and illegal acts are already covered under the Criminal Code. In fact, this part of the debate is so critical to the discussion. It is certainly not a discussion about the facts. Unfortunately what is in the Criminal Code is not being discussed in the House. Bill C-510 is unnecessary and it is redundant. Threats and illegal acts are already covered under the Criminal Code. Counsellors at abortion clinics already screen for possible coercion in women seeking abortions.

The anti-choice movement has noted claims that women are coerced. However, when we walk by abortion clinics across our country, and certainly even the one close to Parliament Hill, we see a much greater movement to coerce women not to get an abortion, often with very aggressive tactics, taking advantage of women who are already in a vulnerable situation, who are already having to make a very difficult decision, often a very conflicted decision.

This debate is also one that is so critical because it identifies the notion of fetal rights that challenges the discussion and the way abortion and a woman's right to choose are legally framed, noting that women have the control over their bodies. The discussion is about the fetus, not the child. As we enter into this discussion, many of us fear that this will open the door to making abortions in our country illegal. The bill attempts to reintroduce the notion of fetal rights through indirect means, by presenting abortion as a social harm to be criminalized.

I noted earlier that while the foundation of the bill is based on a tragic experience, one that took place in my home province, it is important to recognize that much of what has come out has been misrepresented. We note that in this legal case, the murderer, the lawyer and the crown prosecutor all agreed that coercion to have an abortion was not the motive. The bill claims that it would prevent what happened Ms. Roxanne Fernando from Winnipeg. However, when we look at it more closely, it attacks the rights of women to choose, it challenges the work of abortion providers and it rolls back the rights of women in our country by decades.

Unfortunately this is not a new development. The Conservative government and members of it have promoted an anti-choice agenda since they were elected into government. Ironically, in past elections it was stated that a Conservative government would not support any legislation to regulate abortion. Yet the bill deals entirely with that issue. It strives to take a major step in challenging that right of women to choose.

• (1120)

Unfortunately, the bill and the words used to present it have been framed in such a way as to claim to deal with the violence that women face, not only in the discussion around a woman's right to choose, but generally violence that women face. We all know that women face levels of violence, domestic violence, physical, sexual and mental violence in a way that we do not see it with men.

### *Private Members' Business*

Unfortunately, the bill would do nothing to deal with those levels of violence. Not only would the bill not do anything, the government has done nothing. Not only has it failed to reinvest in and continue programs that are critical, it has sought to take away gains that have been made in policy, governing structure and the supports that women look to in order to seek equality.

How many signs do we need to know how much further we have to go forward, not just in the levels of violence that women face. We also need to look at the absence of women in power structures and positions of decision making? It is shameful that in the year 2010 only 21% of the members in the House of Commons are women.

Young people ask me why that is the case. I believe we can look, unfortunately, at very recent policies that seek to strip away the voice of women, as well as men, to speak out as to what is needed for us to eradicate gender-based violence and for women to truly achieve equality.

Let us look at some of the Conservative government's work, not only in the discussion around attacking women's right to choose, but the overall attack on women to achieve equality.

From 2006 onward, we have seen the elimination of equality as an objective in the Status of Women Canada's mission statement. We have seen a 100% cut in funding for advocacy, lobbying and independent research projects funded by the Status of Women Canada.

Dozens of feminist organizations have had their funding severed and have had to close their doors. In the past year, nine groups have lost their funding, including the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, the New Brunswick Pay Equity Coalition and Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec.

We have shamefully seen the loss of funding for the Sisters in Spirit initiative that has sought to counteract the tragic and historically perpetuated levels of violence against aboriginal women. While the government promoted the work of Sisters in Spirit for years in the House, it did not renew the funding for an organization that clearly made known the barriers that aboriginal women faced.

We also saw the loss of funds for over 130 projects in the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, the cancellation of the pan-Canadian child care program and the elimination of the court challenges program.

We need to look at ensuring women have economic support. In my home community in the province of Manitoba, women are going to be losing their jobs in the smelter and the refinery, only to be made more vulnerable in an economy facing a recession.

These are the messages, the actions we need to support women in their work to achieve equality, in our work as Canadians to achieve equality. We need to leave alone the battles for which women, along with men, have fought, which are the right to choose, the right to shape our futures and the right to be equal in our country, Canada.

*Private Members' Business*

● (1125)

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-510, an act to prevent coercion of pregnant women to abort, which was first introduced in the House by the member for Winnipeg South in April.

In his press release dated April 15 of this year, the bill's sponsor stated:

This bill would help protect a pregnant woman who does not want to terminate her pregnancy...No woman should ever feel intimidated to have an unwanted abortion. Anyone who attempts to force a woman to abort her wanted fetus should face consequences.

At the outset, I certainly agree with that sentiment and I have great respect for the sponsor, my friend from Winnipeg South. However, I am troubled by the legislation before the House.

I am sure we all agree that the safety of all Canadians is paramount, in particular protecting the most vulnerable in our society from violence. It is clear that violence against all women, pregnant or not, is a serious issue, with far-reaching effects and consequences.

Violence against women is a persistent and ongoing problem in Canada and around the world, affecting women's personal safety and their ability to contribute to society. It also affects their children, who witness this violence and experience its aftermath, therefore contributing to intergenerational cycles of violence. Although Canadian women fare better than women in most parts of the world, violence against women, sadly, persists in Canada.

However, Canada's criminal law provides a broad range of measures designed to protect persons from violence, including provisions prohibiting all of the following: assault and sexual assault, murder and manslaughter, kidnapping, forcible confinement, trafficking in persons, criminal harassment, uttering threats and intimidation. This government has taken concrete steps to build on these protections through further recent criminal law reforms to ensure that everyone, particularly the most vulnerable members of our society, feel safe and secure in their homes and communities.

The government is proud of its accomplishments in promoting safe streets and communities. For example, the Tackling Violent Crime Act, enacted in 2008, includes enhanced mandatory minimum penalties for firearms offences and strengthens the danger offender provisions. Bill C-48, which is recently before the justice committee on which I proudly serve as a member, would protect Canadians by ending sentence discounts for multiple murders act. It will return to the House in short order.

The Criminal Code also takes violence against women into account in its sentencing provisions, which requires that spousal abuse and abuse of positions of trust or authority must be considered as aggravating circumstances for the purposes of sentencing. In other words, this fact should increase the sentence imposed against the perpetrator.

It is evident that Canadian criminal law aims to protect all women, indeed all Canadians, from violence in its many forms.

As I understand it, Bill C-510, also known as Roxanne's law, was introduced in response to the tragic murder of Roxanne Fernando

because of her unexpected pregnancy in a volatile relationship. She was tragically murdered by her boyfriend and two of his friends. One of the reported motives was that Ms. Fernando was murdered because she would not have an abortion.

It is important to point out that all three offenders involved in this murder are currently serving prison sentences for that murder. There is no question that this is a tragic case, but appears to be one where the criminal justice system has been used to its fullest extent.

Since the case of Ms. Fernando was the inspiration for Bill C-510, let me now discuss the legal effects of the bill. I apologize in advance that some of it is technical and legal, but it is important that members understand the legal ramifications of the bill.

Bill C-510 would create two new hybrid Criminal Code offences. The first would be the offence of coercing a woman to procure an abortion she did not want. This would be punishable by a maximum sentence of five years on indictment and 18 months on summary conviction. The second proposed offence would be the offence of attempting to coerce a woman to procure an abortion she did not want. This would be punishable by a maximum of two years imprisonment on indictment and six months on summary conviction.

The bill proposes a number of definitions to help bring clarity to these offences. Most notably, the bill defines "coercion" and explains where coercive behaviour would reach the level of attracting criminal liability.

● (1130)

The bill states that a person coerces an abortion when he or she engages in conduct that directly or indirectly causes a pregnant woman to consent to an abortion that she would otherwise have refused. The bill goes further to include anyone who conspires with another person to engage in coercive conduct.

Also in the definition of coercion is a list of conduct that could amount to coercion if it were undertaken for the purpose of causing a pregnant woman to have an unwanted abortion. The conduct includes, but is not limited to, violent and threatening behaviour directed either at the woman, her fetus or a third party. Also included is removing, or threatening to remove, financial support or housing from the pregnant woman in attempting to compel by pressure or intimidation including "argumentative and rancorous badgering and importunity".

While most would agree, and I certainly would, that we would not want to encourage such conduct, it is not conduct that normally attracts criminal sanction.

The bill states that the conduct outlined in the proposed definition of coercion is not exhaustive. Therefore, it could encompass much more conduct than is currently outlined in the bill, or for that matter, that the author of the bill foresaw, but it leaves this open to be determined by a court.

*Private Members' Business*

A final part of the definition of coercion is what I call the charter exemption. It is a novel approach in crafting a criminal offence. The bill states that speech, which we all know is protected by section 2(b) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, would not be captured by the definition of coercion and therefore would not attract criminal liability.

There are two other sections of the bill that are worth noting.

First is the limited exemption for a physician who attempts to convince a pregnant woman to have a medical intervention, which may result in the death of the fetus, when the woman's physical health is endangered.

Second is the unique severability provision, which states that if any provisions of this bill are found to be invalid or unenforceable they are to be severed from the bill and shall not affect the application of the other provisions.

In summary, the impacts of this bill would be to criminalize conduct that is already captured by several Criminal Code offences.

For example, conduct such as committing, attempting to commit or threatening to commit physical harm is captured by the offence of uttering threats in section 264.1, assault in section 265 and the general attempt provisions contained in section 24 of the Criminal Code.

Other types of conduct, such as compelling by pressure and rancorous badgering and importunity, are not defined in the bill and would most likely lead to interpretative difficulties and subsequent charter challenges.

Further, interpretive difficulties would most certainly arise because of the charter exemption, which attempts to insulate certain types of conduct from criminal liability if the conduct is protected by section 2(b) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This exemption would require individuals, police and prosecutors to determine whether the conduct in question is protected by the charter, though ultimately it would be the courts that would have to pronounce and be determinative on this issue.

Finally, the novel severability provision, which aims to sever any provision of the bill that a court finds unenforceable, could be interpreted as fettering the discretion of the court to determine the appropriate remedy in the event of a charter breach.

In short and to conclude, I certainly appreciate the objective of the bill and support its author in bringing this matter forward to this House for debate. I believe all members of this House support better protection of pregnant women against any specific form of violence and, in fact, protection for all members of society against all forms of violence. However, I strongly believe that the existing Criminal Code protections adequately protect women, as evidenced by the convictions and significant penalties imposed in the Roxanne Fernando case.

With all due respect and for those reasons, I will be voting against Bill C-510.

• (1135)

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak in support of this great bill.

It is important for all members to be fully informed before they vote on Bill C-510, so I want to address several misconceptions about this bill that were revealed during the first hour of debate.

First, the bill was criticized for using language that was vague and would therefore be subject to a charter challenge. The member who made these comments referred to phrases used in the bill, such as “compel by pressure”, which he said was quite new, and “rancorous badgering”, which he said was extremely new.

Quite honestly, in fact, while the language may seem unusual, the member for Winnipeg South has been assured by legal experts that it comes from long, settled legal jurisprudence.

I also understand from legal experts that the threshold for deeming a law vague is high, and in their opinion the wording used in Bill C-510 gives clear direction as to what is prohibited and how the section should be enforced.

Terms used, such as rancorous badgering, as previously mentioned, and coercion have been considered and upheld by various courts in both criminal and labour law cases. These terms, along with others found in the bill, therefore provide sufficient guidance to avoid allegations of vagueness.

Second, during the debate, one member claimed that this bill would restrict access to freedom of choice. The truth is that the bill actually expands the pregnant woman's choice and freedom to protect her against anyone who uses coercive means to take away her freedom to continue her pregnancy.

The only choice restricted by this bill is the choice of a third party who wants to impose an abortion on a woman against her will.

Should this bill be enacted into law, full legal access to abortion will still be available to women who freely choose that option. It would be no different, the same as today.

Third, a very serious misreading of the existing Criminal Code is obviously behind the statement made by a member who said, “This bill recognizes the fetus as a child and therefore a person with legal status”.

If the member's comments were actually true, that is, if recognizing the fetus as a child in the Criminal Code implies that the fetus is a person with legal status, then that would mean that the fetus is a person with legal status right now, that is today, because the Criminal Code as it exists today also refers to the fetus as a child. Obviously that would have a legal impact on abortion today without Bill C-510.

The member was incorrect in stating that the use of the word “child” implies anything about personhood. The Criminal Code currently uses the term “child” and only that term when referring to the fetus. The Criminal Code, much to the disappointment of pro-life people, quite honestly defines human beings in section 223(1) as follows:

A child becomes a human being within the meaning of this Act when it has completely proceeded, in a living state, from the body of its mother.

*Private Members' Business*

Fourth, the same member was also incorrect when she stated that Bill C-510 contradicts the election promises of the Conservative Party. During the last election, its platform stated, "A Conservative Government will not support any legislation to regulate abortion".

Of course there are two problems with this statement. First, Bill C-510 has nothing to do with the Conservative government. It is a private member's bill, not a government bill. Second, while it is true that the Conservative government does have a policy as described by the member, Bill C-510 does not go against that policy.

As I said before, and it bears repeating because people do not seem to understand this point, this bill does not regulate abortion in any way.

Bill C-510 does not prohibit a single abortion and it does not regulate a single abortion. It deals only with behaviour that aims to impose an abortion on a woman who does not want it.

• (1140)

Not only does Bill C-510 not go against existing Conservative policy; it actually is supported by another Conservative policy adopted in 2008, which recognizes the need for additional protection for pregnant women.

Fifth, another member criticized the bill for being totally redundant. She claimed it was entirely covered already by existing Criminal Code offences. Whether every single behaviour that could conceivably be captured by Bill C-510 is already sprinkled throughout various existing provisions in the Criminal Code is not at all clear. While there is certainly some overlap, it is almost certain that some of what constitutes abortion coercion in Bill C-510 would not be a crime today.

What is clear is that, while coercion clearly occurs, we are all well aware from various reports, as well as from personal testimonies, that no one has been charged with this offence. This means that our current laws are not doing their job.

It hardly matters if something is already illegal if no one, including the victim, the perpetrator or the police, actually knows it is illegal. Bill C-510 would clarify the law. With a clear law on the books, a law that defines abortion coercion explicitly, which no law currently does, pregnant women would be more aware of their rights and would be empowered to take action before it is too late, not after.

The general public would also become more aware and this would help curb coercive behaviour against pregnant women in the first place. I believe Bill C-510 would raise the public conscience to a new level of respect for pregnant women, which would have a positive impact not only on the lives of women but the whole of Canadian society.

We already have offences that one could argue are not necessary because more general provisions would cover them. For example, let us use the definition of assault. It is intentionally very broad, intended to encompass all sorts and forms of assault, but Parliament chose to add sections specifying assault with a weapon, aggravated assault, sexual assault and assault causing bodily harm. These crimes were specified because they were deemed unambiguously worthy of condemnation. I hope the critics of Bill C-510 are not implying that

coercing a woman to abort a wanted pregnancy is not especially worthy of condemnation.

It is significant to note that this type of law also exists in other free democratic societies. For example, translation of a German law states, "whoever unlawfully with force or threat of serious harm causes a person to commit, suffer or omit an act shall be liable to imprisonment...". An especially serious case typically occurs if the offender causes a pregnant woman to terminate a pregnancy.

In Italy, any person inducing a pregnancy termination without the consent of the woman shall be liable to four to eight years imprisonment. Consent extracted by violence or threats or under false pretenses shall be deemed not to be granted.

Laws also exist in France and some U.S. states.

Bill C-510 has the potential to do much good. The criticisms made against it are based on misunderstandings of the bill and misunderstandings about laws that exist today. Numerous other jurisdictions worldwide have similar laws. Women today, especially those who are in vulnerable situations, can only be helped by such a law. It would have no impact on the current legal status of abortion in this country.

I support this bill, and I see no reason to prevent it from getting a fair hearing at committee.

• (1145)

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, I do not have a full 10 minute speech, but there are a couple of things that have come to the discussion today that need to be addressed. I am not sure if the members opposite, particularly the member for Churchill, were uninformed or deliberately trying to give the wrong impression about the bill, but I got the sense that the member for Churchill seemed to be implying that Roxanne Fernando's death did not come about as a result of her refusal to have an abortion.

It is important to point out that the crown prosecutor at the sentencing hearing was very clear when he talked about the fact that this was specifically a motive by these young men who took her life.

We need to remember that a young lady lost her life over this issue. We have heard people this morning say this is all covered in the Criminal Code. Her murder was covered in the Criminal Code and these young men are serving their time for that, which they rightly should be doing, but the issue of coercion was not covered in the Criminal Code. Those men were not charged with that.

We need to refocus the debate today back on the element of coercion and the fact that women should not be coerced in their dealings with their children. It is not in the interest of women or children to pretend otherwise.



*Private Members' Business*

We need to be clear this morning that the debate has been about the issue of coerced abortion. This is not a bill about abortion and restricting abortion rights. I think those folks who have indicated that either do not understand the bill clearly or are trying to perform some mischief.

As we heard just a few minutes ago, other countries have felt it is important to bring this level of protection. I heard the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex talk about the fact that Germany has brought in protection on this issue; that Italy has felt it is important that women be protected in this area; and that France also has seen that this is an important issue in terms of protecting women and children.

In this country we need to have a better and more honest debate than we have had on this.

There are states in the U.S. that have taken this up as something they feel is important to protect women's rights.

I will wrap up by encouraging my colleagues to support the bill. It is an important bill. When my colleague presented the bill I said during questions and comments that this is a necessary bill. I thought it was necessary then and I think it is necessary now.

I encourage my colleagues in the House to stand and support the bill and see it pass second reading.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** With his five minute right of reply, the hon. member for Winnipeg South.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as a father, I love my children and I know their mother perhaps loves them even more than I do, if that is possible. Some mothers fall in love with their children even before birth in a way that few of us can understand. These mothers should never have to make a choice between protecting themselves or the child they love.

Forced abortion should be made illegal in Canada. Roxanne's law would accomplish this. The main argument used against Roxanne's law is that the bill is totally redundant because, so opponents claim, abortion coercion is already covered in the Criminal Code under existing provisions for assaults, uttering threats or intimidation. If I wanted to oppose a bill whose sole purpose was to protect women from abortion coercion, I too would want to find some excuse that made it sound like I was in favour of forced abortion. Saying it is already illegal gives me that cover. It allows me to oppose the bill for what sounds to be a legitimate reason while still professing how terrible it is to coerce a woman into having an abortion. After all, who wants to be known as someone who supports what the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada called a crime against humanity? The problem is that the argument that it is already illegal falls apart upon analysis.

Although some of the conduct described in Bill C-510 could fall under existing provisions in the Criminal Code, depending on the circumstances, not all behaviour that could fall under the definition of coercion in Bill C-510 would be captured under existing provisions. It is important to note that the list of examples of coercion in Bill C-510 is not exhaustive. This allows the court some discretion in deciding what constitutes abortion coercion given how it is defined in the bill. Above all though, the fact that no one has ever been charged with coercing an abortion in Canada is absolute

proof that clarification of the law is desperately needed, a law Roxanne Fernando could have used to protect herself.

Even in cases where a more general provision would suffice, there is tremendous value in having a new Criminal Code provision specific to abortion coercion. Criminal law scholars say we use the criminal law as a way of indicating a serious condemnation of an activity or action not only to punish people but also to state our most important social values and to send a clear message expressing society's rejection and intolerance of a specific act. When we single out coerced abortion as a separate offence, it is a signal that such behaviour should be denounced as a serious offence. It reflects a social value about the unacceptability of forcing a pregnant woman into ending a pregnancy she wants to continue.

Creating specific provisions when a more general provision already exists in the Criminal Code is not a new idea. There are three such bills currently before Parliament which have passed at least one parliamentary vote. Bill S-9 makes it an offence to steal a motor vehicle even though theft is already an offence. It received royal assent last month. Bill S-215 and Bill C-464 also bring important clarifications to laws that perhaps already capture the crimes contemplated. These are excellent ideas and important clarifications, just as Roxanne's law is.

Thus, it is clear that as legislators we often create offences and provisions even when a more general provision would suffice. We do this in order to send a strong message of denunciation to affirm society's deeply held values and to educate the public. Should one choose to vote against Bill C-510, it will be seen as a choice to turn a blind eye to a horrible injustice.

Roxanne Fernando's story has now been heard across the country and if not now, someday soon she will be considered a Canadian hero. In this Christmas season, I ask members to consider bringing additional protection to mothers with child who are facing dangerous circumstances.

• (1150)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

*Government Orders*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, December 15, 2010, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

...was added to the Criminal Code in the hope that it would provide an incentive for long-term offenders to rehabilitate themselves and, therefore, afford more protection to prison guards.

## SUSPENSION OF SITTING

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The House will now suspend until 12 o'clock.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:55 a.m.)

I can understand where the Conservatives are coming from. They say they are in favour of protecting victims and that we absolutely must protect victims. They keep saying over and over again that we absolutely must protect victims.

## SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12:00)

Therein lies the problem because the faint hope clause is working quite well. I hope my Conservative friends will listen, I cannot help it if they do not, but we will repeat this ad nauseam in the coming months: as of October 10, 2010, because the death penalty was abolished, there were 4,774 inmates serving life sentences in Canada. Contrary to what our Conservative friends think, and I hope the Liberals will finally hear the truth, those convicted of and serving time for murder are not sentenced to 25 years in prison. That is not true. They are sentenced to life imprisonment—for the rest of their days. I know that the Conservatives will never listen and never understand that.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

•(1200)

[*Translation*]

**SERIOUS TIME FOR THE MOST SERIOUS CRIME ACT**

The House resumed from December 10 consideration of Bill S-6, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and another Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee; and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since I have only 10 minutes and we are at the amendment stage, I will address that particular topic right away. The government proposed three amendments and I would like to set the record straight once and for all: we will be voting against those amendments, which would reinstate the short title. The government has a tendency to politicize things in these matters. The title of Bill S-6 begins with “An Act to amend the Criminal Code”. We have no problem with that. Where we do have a problem is with the short title: “Serious Time for the Most Serious Crime Act”. Clearly, we will vote against these amendments. Clearly, we will vote against Bill S-6. Clearly, this government has no direction and is using this bill to try to appeal to the public.

•(1205)

These individuals will remain in the custody of the Correctional Service of Canada for the rest of their days. I repeat: it goes without saying that, for the rest of their days, these individuals will remain in the custody of the Correctional Service of Canada and the National Parole Board

Bill S-6 pertains to the faint hope clause. I would remind those watching us that in 1976, Canada abolished the death penalty for those who commit the most appalling, most serious crime in the Criminal Code: murder. Under the Liberals, the bill that abolished the death penalty also introduced what is known as the faint hope clause. Here is what it is all about. After a certain amount of time, after serving between 15 and 17 years in prison, offenders have the right—I hope they will still have this right—to apply to the Superior Court for the district in which the original sentence was handed down to be granted the opportunity to appear before the parole board. I am saying all this because Bill S-6, a bill from the Senate, is just not right. It makes absolutely no sense.

I only have five minutes for my speech and then there will be a five-minute period for questions, which I will be pleased to answer. I would like to provide some statistics. I did not make them up; they are from the Correctional Service of Canada. I asked the Conservatives to provide statistics to rebut the CSC data, but no one came up with any.

The bill does not make sense and I hope the Liberals will wake up. I hope the Liberals will hear the truth and hear what is being said today and what will be said on this bill in the coming weeks, or months if necessary. In any event, this bill absolutely must not be passed. The faint hope clause, and I am quoting from the Library of Parliament:

In Canada, there are 4,774 inmates serving life sentences. Of these, 1,508 were eligible for judicial review. The death penalty was abolished in 1976, and therefore we had to wait 15 to 17 years before the first hearing was held in 1987. Since then, 181 decisions have been made: 146 resulted in a reduction of the ineligibility period for parole, and 35 were refused. Proof that the system works lies in the fact that it protects the public and therefore the victims.

*Government Orders*

I will continue with the Correctional Service of Canada statistics: 144 inmates have now reached their revised eligibility dates and 135 have been released. Half of those released, or 68 inmates, have not posed a problem; they have reintegrated into society and been rehabilitated. Thirty-five had their parole suspended, but not revoked. They had minor breaches of conditions, such as returning home at midnight instead of 10 p.m. The rules are very strict and the National Parole Board monitors them very closely. Thus, 23 had their parole suspended, but afterwards things went smoothly. Only 23 of the possible 4,000 inmates had their parole revoked. Only 2 of those 23 out of the 4,000 were convicted of other violent crimes, such as aggravated assault or assault with a weapon, but not murder.

So the system is working well. I do not understand the decision of this side of the House, the Liberal side. The Liberals are the ones who introduced the faint hope clause in 1976 after they abolished the death penalty. And it has been working so well that even the farthest-right, right-wing Conservatives are unable to provide us with any statistics to show that murders have been committed by parolees. This has not happened since 1987. The murderers who have been released from prison have all respected the conditions of their parole.

I know that we are at the report and amendments stage, but I will come back to this later. I will certainly have the opportunity to rise in the House again and speak out against the cheap populist approach that the Conservatives are taking with this bill. It is a cheap populist approach to say that anyone can be released on parole when such is not the case. The organizations that are currently taking very good care of the public and victims are the National Parole Board and the Correctional Service of Canada. They manage to keep criminals who are not ready to return to society from doing so.

I will gladly answer any questions.

• (1210)

[*English*]

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would say to my colleague from the Bloc that as we took the evidence at the justice committee it seemed to me very clear. I do not think that anybody who is objective about the evidence we heard could deny that the faint hope clause and the system we built up under it, in terms of how one is able to apply for and get that result, has been as successful as any program in our correction services, bar none. The rate of recidivism is the lowest of any program we have.

I know my colleague from the Bloc has practised criminal law for an extended period of time before being elected selected to this House.

[*Translation*]

Does he feel there is a better system than the faint hope system?

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh for his comments and question, as well as for the work he does on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. In my opinion, there is no better system. It is the best system.

Even though this system works well, the Conservatives are getting ready to increase violence in prisons and take all hope away from inmates with this bill. They are going to take away all hope of returning to society. There are 135 former inmates who have been released under this system and today are functioning members of

society. I even know some who are doctors. I argued such cases. These people returned to society and are now doctors. Yes, they committed murder, the worst crime a person can commit, but they came back into society after spending 17 years in prison.

With the Liberals' support, the Conservatives are getting ready to destroy a system that works very well. I hope the Liberals will think again.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am beginning to wonder how much the public really knows or understands about this whole issue about the faint hope clause. Does the public really understand that in 1997 the Liberal government changed the law to eliminate faint hope clause applications for multiple murderers so that it would never apply to multiple murderers like Clifford Olson, who are in prison right now?

Does the member think the public also understands that the changes the government is bringing in, in this bill, would not take effect for 15 years?

In actual fact, there is a lot of smoke and mirrors here. The government is trying to present to the public that it is tough on crime, that it has eliminated the faint hope clause, which, as I said, had already been eliminated for multiple murderers in 1997, and the faint hope clause elimination for individual murderers would not actually be applied in Canada for 15 years, long after most of us would be gone from this House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite right. This bill will not prevent Clifford Olson from applying and saying that he has the right to do so. It will not change anything. With this bill, the government would have us believe that it is being tough on crime, but the bill solves nothing.

If only this bill at least addressed some issues. I can understand the minimum sentences the Conservatives are calling for. They are playing politics. But Bill S-6 not only fixes nothing; it will create problems in our prisons.

If the member for Beauce listened carefully—God knows he should listen so he can talk to his colleagues, instead of plugging his ears—he would understand. I hope he will be able to tell his colleagues that Bill S-6 solves nothing. The Conservatives are going to create problems in very short order, because when an inmate realizes that he has no more hope and no chance of returning to society, he is going to go to work for the worst of the worst in prison. So there will be big trouble in the coming years.

• (1215)

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this debate on the government's Bill S-6 at report stage.

*Government Orders*

The government, through its Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, was all over the media yesterday denouncing the three opposition parties and claiming that the opposition was delaying government bills in general, and Bill S-6 in particular.

[*English*]

I would like to put certain facts before the House. Bill S-6 in the previous session of the 40th Parliament was Bill C-36. The government tabled it in the House. The bill went through the three stages in the House, was adopted and sent over to the Senate. The government, in its wisdom, did not move second reading in the Senate. Instead, the Prime Minister decided to prorogue the House in December 2009. The House was prorogued for close to two and a half months.

When the second session of the 40th Parliament began on March 3, there was a throne speech. Did the government at its first opportunity reintroduce Bill C-36? No, it did not. It waited 48 days after the throne speech before tabling its legislation again. Then after tabling it 48 days after the throne speech, it let the bill sit, collecting dust, for 99 days before it moved second reading debate. If anyone has held up this bill it is not the opposition, definitely not the official opposition, but the government itself.

The government counts on the fact that most Canadians are not paying enough attention to what is actually happening in the House and what the procedures are to realize that it is their own government that is holding up its own justice legislation.

One could speculate on the reasons the Conservative government has for doing do that. I speculate, given that every end of session in December and June for close to the last five years, the minister of justice, whoever he or she has been under the Conservative government, has gone to the media to claim that the opposition is holding up the government's justice bills and if the opposition would be conciliatory and work with the government, the justice bills would get through.

When we look at each of the bills the government identifies at each one of those periods, June and December of 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and now 2010, those are the very bills that the government itself has held up, either by letting them sit at first reading and not moving second reading debate, or by not even introducing them initially.

With those facts on the record, I would like now to speak to the content of Bill S-6.

[*Translation*]

We know that victims and their families want the faint hope clause to be abolished. No one wants those found guilty of serious crimes to get out of jail without serving a long enough sentence. It is for that reason that when we, the Liberals, were in government, we placed restrictions on the faint hope clause so that anyone found guilty of multiple murders would not be eligible. Contrary to the claims of the Conservative government, the amendments it is proposing to make to the law will not apply to dangerous criminals such as Clifford Olson. Russell Williams also will not be able to avail himself of the faint hope clause to obtain a judicial review because of the changes made by the previous Liberal government.

The faint hope clause, also known as judicial review, gives inmates who are serving a life sentence the opportunity to request a judicial review after 15 years of incarceration in order to determine whether or not they may apply for parole. Parole is not automatically granted. The application must first be heard by a jury selected from members of the community where the crime took place. If the 12 jurors unanimously agree, the inmate may apply to the National Parole Board. If the inmate proceeds, the National Parole Board determines whether the inmate, once released, may pose a risk to society or if release will contribute to his or her rehabilitation.

The Liberals believe that a balance must be struck between punishment and rehabilitation in our correctional system. We would like the government to invest more in crime prevention and programs for the victims of crime. Although the faint hope clause helps make our prisons safer and contributes to the rehabilitation of offenders, we believe that access to it must be limited.

The government is not taking into consideration the facts around the faint hope clause. Despite this clause, someone convicted of premeditated murder in Canada serves 28 years in prison on average. That is longer than in any other country that imposes life sentences with possibility of parole, including the United States. Prison guards feel that the faint hope clause helps keep them safe. The Correctional Investigator of Canada believes that the current faint hope clause serves the purpose for which it was conceived.

The Liberals proposed amendments to the Conservative bill in response to calls from various victims' groups. These groups told us that they live in a constant state of anxiety because of the faint hope clause, so we amended the bill to require that the Commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada notify victims when an inmate applies for judicial review of his case. The commissioner already notifies victims' families when an inmate applies for judicial review. But under the current law, the commissioner is not required to notify victims' families when an inmate does not apply. Under the bill, once the inmate's opportunity to apply has passed, he must wait five years before reapplying.

The Liberal amendment moved and passed with the support of the Bloc and the NDP was as follows.

● (1220)

When an inmate does not exercise his right to apply for a judicial review under the faint hope clause, the commissioner should notify the families and indicate the next date on which the inmate will be eligible to apply. Unfortunately, the Conservatives on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights voted against this amendment. I am puzzled by that.

*Government Orders*

We also proposed a second amendment that would extend the 90-day period for applying for a judicial review to a maximum of 180 days when the judge feels that extraordinary circumstances beyond the inmate's control prevented him from applying within the 90-day period.

I will stop here, because I see that my time is up. I invite hon. members to ask me questions.

• (1225)

[English]

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask my colleague who also sits on the justice committee with me the same question as I asked the Bloc.

With regard to the system whereby the faint hope clause is available, I know the member has analyzed this and listened to all the evidence that we heard at that point. Is she aware of any other system within corrections, parole or probation that has been as successful in terms of limiting recidivism? By that I mean not only the very minor breaches that sometimes occur but in particular there have been only two cases, in all of the cases where the faint hope clause has in fact been used, where there is even a suggestion of a serious crime being committed by individuals who are released under that program.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Tecumseh for the question he asked. According to the evidence we heard from justice officials, from victims groups and from organizations that work with inmates and with people who are out on parole, no, we did not hear of any other program within our sentencing regime and our Criminal Code that pertains directly to the Correctional Service of Canada that appears to work as well as the faint hope clause regime does and has proved itself to do—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for another excellent speech on the bill.

I want to make a *Hansard* correction. The member for Windsor—Tecumseh pointed out that I inadvertently indicated that the Liberals changed the faint hope clause, removing the faint hope clause option for multiple murderers such as Clifford Olson, and it was in 1997. I know I have mentioned that several times already, but I evidently have used a different year. Therefore, I want to correct that in *Hansard*.

However, the Liberal government did change the faint hope clause in 1997 to remove that option for any multiple murderers like Clifford Olson, like Mr. Williams. The fact of the matter is I do not know how much the public knows or understands about that.

This particular bill is to remove the faint hope clause for other murderers, but 15 years from now. The Conservative are going to campaign on the issue that somehow they have removed the faint hope clause. The reality is that it is going to take 15 years for it to take effect.

I would ask the member to comment on that particular piece of information.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question from the member from the NDP and I am glad that I now realize that I misstated the name of the riding of my earlier colleague from the NDP. It is not Tecumseh, it is Windsor—Tecumseh. So for the record I would also join in correcting a misstatement.

The member is quite right that if one looks at the bill, the repeal of the faint hope clause will actually only have effect 15 years after the coming into effect of this legislation, should it pass all Houses, be adopted and receive royal assent. Clearly the Conservative government has no interest in educating the public, educating groups that represent families of victims and victims themselves of the actual facts of this case.

It is not surprising. We see it with a number of other pieces of legislation, such as the white collar crime bill, which the Liberals, the Bloc and the NDP were clamouring for back in 2007-08. The government finally brought it through after letting it sit for 216 days before actually pushing it forward. That is a bill that Liberals attempted to amend in order to remove the early release at one-sixth of the sentence. The Conservatives voted against it. How about that?

• (1230)

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the amendments proposed by the government as a result of three changes the justice committee made at committee to Bill S-6.

I want to be clear that, like the Bloc, the NDP is totally opposed to the legislation and we will be speaking to that when this matter gets to third reading. With regard to the amendments, we supported the changes made at committee but now the government is trying to reverse those changes. One change is the deletion of the short title. The second change deals with the amount of time, which was very short and still is, an individual who was looking to apply for this would be given in order to make the application. The third change was a response to an issue of victims rights and sharing information with the families of murder victims and perhaps more extended members, loved ones and friends.

I will go through those three amendments one at a time, but before I do, it is important that at every opportunity we get we make it clear to those who are opposed to getting rid of this legislation and this regime that Canada has at the present time the longest sentences served, not given but served, in the world, with the exception of a very small category in the United States.

In the United States, where people are sentenced to life as a result of a murder, first degree murder in most cases, are granted the opportunity to get parole but they only serve 18.5 years. In Canada, people who are convicted of first degree murder serve 28.5 years.

In the United States there is a category where people can be sentenced to life imprisonment with no possibility of parole. It does not happen very often but there are cases like that. Even in those cases, however, the average person in the United States who is convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life with no opportunity for parole ever, only spends 29 years in prison and then, on average, die in prison at year 29.

*Government Orders*

We heard this from practically everyone who works in this area and we heard the question being put to the Conservatives on the justice committee. They wanted to know where the problem was and where we were going with this legislation? The only answer was that it would make it less onerous on the families of victims of murder to be faced with the likelihood that they will need to go repeatedly before a judge to defend why the person should not be given the faint hope clause opportunity.

Then again, here are the facts. We have had 3 cases in the 4,715 either first or second degree murder cases where people applied more than once under the faint hope clause. Out of the 4,715 cases since this faint hope clause came into effect, the people who were eligible to apply for the faint hope clause, we had 3 applications. That is what this bill will do away with.

The other reality is that the average person who was released under the faint hope clause in 2009, the average sentence the person served was 25 years.

•(1235)

Even though we hear of reinstating this title of truth in sentencing, that they do serious time for the most serious crime, they are doing that time. If we were to look at the last five years, not just 2009, we would see that the average person was released under the faint hope clause after about 23 to 23.5 years.

The Conservatives have run around the country stirring up emotion and scaring the families and close ones of murdered victims by telling them that they will be faced with repeated applications every two years, which is what the law allows now. They have been told that every two years they will be before a judge or a judge and jury, or before the Parole Board and they will have to relive the crime. That is simply not true. As I said before, there have been three cases where there has been a second application. By the way, there was only a second application in those three cases. There has never been a case where a person has applied more than twice.

Therefore, this fear that every two years, from the 15th year when a person can first apply under the current law in a first degree murder case, until the 25th year when people could theoretically be faced with this, if my math is correct, five times, there has never been more than three cases, and that has only occurred on the second application three times. However, this fear is stoked and the Conservatives repeat it and repeat it.

My colleague from Winnipeg was telling me that Tom Flanagan, the mentor of the Prime Minister and the guy who suggested that Assange should be assassinated, was quoted in one of his sayings that it does not have to be true what one is saying, it just has to be believable, which is what this is about. This is believable because it is in the law that a person can apply every two years from the 15-year mark in first degree murder. Of course, if one is a multiple murderer, he or she cannot apply until the 25th year under the Parole Act. However, the Conservatives continue to say it.

We have witnesses who come before us out of fear. We had the ombudsman come before us and she recounted the stories of victims she has been in touch with. One of their fears was to wake up at around the 15-year mark and worry that for the next 10 years, every two years they will be faced with an application. Does anybody

within the correction system, the justice department or the government tell them that is not what will happen and never has happened? No. However, the Conservatives' minions run around the country saying that this is what people will be up against. They tell people who have suffered the tremendous loss of a family member that they will be faced with this every two years. That is absolutely false.

I want to speak to one of the amendments being proposed here. The reason the majority of the justice committee deleted the phony title was that it did not reflect the reality of what happens in Canada. When we are talking about a serious crime, and there is nothing more serious than murder, Canadian victims have every right to know that we keep murderers in custody longer than anybody else in the world, and that is 28.5 years on average.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely correct in what he said. The public actually do believe that somehow Clifford Olson, Paul Bernardo and Russell Williams are, almost on an annual basis, making applications under the faint hope clause.

In fact, in 1997 the previous Liberal government introduced legislation that was passed in the House to ban faint hope clause applications for any multiple murderer. Clifford Olson has not been able to apply at all since 1997 and, even if he were, he could not apply on an annual basis anyway. This is a lot of smoke and mirrors.

Tom Flanagan did say that what one says does not have to be true, it just has to sound plausible. That is the mantra of the government and that is the strategy it follows.

The member did mention that out of 4,715 cases there were only 3 applications, since the faint hope came into existence, made for a second case.

I would like to ask the member to repeat some of those arguments because I think the public should hear them over and over again.

•(1240)

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Mr. Speaker, of the 4,715 cases since the faint hope clause came into existence, we have only had, on average over that period of time, and it has fluctuated slightly, 16% of people apply for the faint hope clause.

As I said earlier, in 2009, when prisoners did not get out until the 25th year, most of them applied quite late in the process as opposed to when they could have applied. Usually somewhere between 21 and 22 years is when inmates make their first applications. That is the normal pattern. It takes them about two years to get through that process and another year to get through the parole process.

We must remember that the faint hope clause only allows the right to apply for parole. Inmates still need to go through the parole process and they are at times not granted.

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member just pointed out the minuscule effect this would have, if any, in increasing public safety. I know he has some good advice for the government on what it could actually do that would affect a significant number of people and make Canada safer, and maybe he could outline that.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Mr. Speaker, let me deal with the issue of alternatives.

In terms of reducing the fear people have of multiple applications, we should be examining the Parole Act and giving the Parole Board the authority, as we have under the faint hope clause. A judge and jury under the faint hope clause as it exists now can tell inmates that they have heard their application, that they will never get out and that they do not need apply again. They can do that right now and, in fact, have done it with Clifford Olson the one time he applied.

The Parole Board should be given the same jurisdiction so that we could then tell the families of the victims of murderers that the person was allowed to apply for parole, at this point it would be at 25 years, the individual was turned down and was told never to apply again or not to apply for another 10 years.

I want to be very clear on this for my friend from Yukon. The key here is that the government must communicate that to the families of victims and it is not being done right now. The families are oftentimes left in ignorance and then the Conservative Party plays on those fears. If we tell families what they will be facing, that they will never be faced with another application or that it will be 10 years from now, that is a great way of empowering them into being able to deal with the system.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The recorded division on Motion No. 1 stands deferred. The next question is on Motion No. 2. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

•(1245)

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The recorded division on Motion No. 2 stands deferred. The next question is on Motion No. 3. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The recorded division on Motion No. 3 stands deferred.

The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at report stage of the bill.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that the votes on Bill S-6 and the amendments be deferred to the end of government orders today.

**Mr. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, I request that the votes be deferred to tomorrow, Tuesday, December 14 at the end of government orders.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** As members of the House may be aware, the whips for the government and the opposition, or their designates, may approach the table and ask for the deferral of a vote. If both should do so, it is the Chair's wish that the two would come to some agreement in terms of when that would be. The Chair is willing to give the two designated whips a moment to consult and possibly re-approach the table with an agreement.

**Mr. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, in a case like this, the latest date for the votes is the one that has to be accepted by the Speaker.

*Government Orders*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It would appear that the two designated whips are unable to come to an agreement, but are in agreement with the argument made by the hon. member for Yukon that when there is a disagreement, the votes shall take place on the later date proposed. As such, the recorded divisions stand deferred until the end of government business tomorrow.

\* \* \*

● (1250)

**ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE  
MODERNIZATION ACT**

**Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC)** moved that Bill C-43, An Act to enact the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Labour Relations Modernization Act and to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address the bill before us today. As background, I think I join all members of Parliament in saying how much we appreciate the men and women of the RCMP who have for generations, and continue to, served Canadians from coast to coast. They have done that with professionalism, with courage, with commitment and with dedication. From the most remote areas of our country to highly urbanized settings, the RCMP has been there for us and continues to be. Citizens recognize and appreciate that from coast to coast.

I especially learned more about the RCMP and its workings in a previous portfolio, public safety. During that time, my appreciation for the RCMP and the work which it did only grew. In fact, I had a great opportunity to see how the RCMP was recognized, not just nationally but internationally, as a policing force and as a police organization that had demonstrated time and time again that it had the professionalism, the dedication and the commitment to do the job that Canadians had come to know and respect and to appreciate.

No organization is beyond having an inward look. No organization performs perfectly 100% all the time. That is certainly true of this chamber in which we now stand and even of the occasional political party. It has been known that 100% perfection is not always achieved.

It was an honour for me, as one of a number of highlights with the RCMP and my involvement with it, to preside over the first ever appointment of a female commissioner of the RCMP, particularly in a difficult time. She did an admirable job and had the resounding support of members throughout the organization. I was also able to preside over the appointment of the first ever non-RCMP officer to the appointment of commissioner. Therefore, the RCMP has shown that it is, in many ways, a modern organization facing the challenges of international crime, national crime, modernization on a technological basis and in virtually every other level.

A year ago, April 6, a court ruling in the Ontario Superior Court looked at the labour management regime of the RCMP. Presently the labour management regime has a staff relations representative program, one that was contested in court in terms of its constitutionality as recently as 1999. In fact, the constitutionality

of the labour relations setup in the RCMP withstood that constitutional challenge.

The RCMP, as we would all know here, is the only police force in Canada that is not unionized. It was more or less on that basis that a challenge was taken to the Ontario court, which came to a conclusion that it was not constitutional for RCMP members to be represented in this present manner because it had not yet fully allowed them the choice of having a collective bargaining process that would be recognized as a union-based process. Therefore, the court said that the present regime was not constitutional.

Now people may debate that back and forth. Even within this chamber there may be different views on that, but that was the ruling of the court. The court wisely put an 18 month stay on its decision because it said that if we declared April 6, 2009 to be the day that the present staff relations representative program was null and void, there would be the possibility for a high degree of chaos within the organization.

● (1255)

Individual groups could spring up all around the country. We could even have the possibility of an organization represented by a number of unions or a number of different organizations. Therefore, the Ontario court said that it would stay this for 18 months, until something was in place that would meet the demand of the court.

The government appealed that, for a number of reasons. One of the main reasons was there was another case at the Supreme Court of Canada, the Fraser case. The outcome would have some direct bearing on this one. Therefore, the Government of Canada appealed the Ontario ruling and asked for that to be taken into consideration.

The courts ruled favourably on the federal government's appeal on that. The present situation is this will be addressed 30 days after the result of the ruling on the Fraser case by the Supreme Court of Canada. We will have to wait to see when that happens. We do not have a date for that as it is at the pleasure of the Supreme Court.

However, there has to be an immediate vehicle in place, should the rulings go in such a way that the Ontario ruling is upheld and the present labour relations regime is upheld as being unconstitutional, to allow RCMP members to decide what type of labour management regime will work best for them.

I want to make it clear. The modernization act before us is not an act which would force or require unionization of the RCMP. It is an act that would meet the demand of the court and say that certain provisions would have to be followed, certain constitutional guarantees of representation by members would be put in place, but it would leave that choice to RCMP members. That is the nub of the issue.



*Government Orders*

The act looks at modernizing a number of other areas also. The entire grievance and disciplinary process in the RCMP needs to be addressed. Right now, the way it is set up, members do not have available to them certain elements of appeal within a grievance process that other members of similar organizations have. This would put in place in the Public Service Labour Relations Board certain abilities for the board to appoint adjudicators. It would allow for disputes or grievances to be addressed early on where members could be face to face with others in the grievance process to look at a possible early resolution of a grievance matter.

Right now, members who face a disciplinary process may have to wait months, in fact, even longer than that, sometimes years, before the resolution of a particular grievance. That is not a fair process to have members going through, having a decision or a cloud hanging over not just their head but possibly their careers for an interminable amount of time. This would speed that process up and would allow for some early intervention and possible early resolution.

There are a number of grievance and disciplinary-related areas in the particular modernization that would to assist the public and assist RCMP members.

Also some changes would be foreseen on the part of the commissioner, whomever the commissioner of the day might be. Presently deputy heads of organizations within government have available to them the levers and the mechanisms to take disciplinary action and also to allow for rewards. That is fairly limited in the present legal situation related to the commissioner. Therefore, there would be some provisions that would allow the commissioner to act with the responsibility that would be commensurate with that position.

The staff relations representatives, certainly the ones I have known and have worked with previously as minister, and I am sure members in the House work with on a local basis, have served with sincerity and with commitment, always looking to the best interest of their members.

● (1300)

This particular legislation is not a reflection on the way they have performed the tasks which the members have asked them to perform. As I said earlier, it is a reflection on the court ruling which is demanding a change. The decision will ultimately rest in the hands of the members themselves, and that is the way it should be.

Adjustments will be made to the past process of pay and having a pay council making recommendations. There will be an external advisory capacity. A number of areas will be directly affected, which are in place, should members here agree. I believe there is some support for having this legislation in place pending a final ruling so that whatever happens the members of the RCMP, the men and women who have committed their lives to keeping us safe, to serving us as admirably as they do, will have the assurance that a mechanism will be in place that will not leave their concerns unattended whichever way the final ruling in court goes.

That is what we have before us today. I would invite careful analysis of this particular modernization act. I hope that we will find support for it. This is being done in a non-partisan way because the interests and the safety and security of our communities, our

families, our businesses are paramount at this point in time. I believe members on all sides will see it this way and that is what I anticipate as the bill moves forward.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the overview of this important legislation. I am sure the minister is aware that some civilian members of the RCMP have concerns about this particular piece of legislation. They have some unique issues and concerns and special needs which they think need to be addressed. They are concerned that this bill would not do that and would lump them in with the officers.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague would address those concerns, please.

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend recognizes what some Canadians may not and that is the public's perception of an RCMP detachment. People who work there are uniformed members of the RCMP. Also, throughout the force there are what we call civilian members who are not members of the RCMP. For example, there are people who work in laboratories, people who do administrative work, and people who do the dispatching. In any variety of these job classifications individuals may find themselves as public servants or civilian members.

They are being consulted. We want input from them. We do not see a change at this point. This legislation would not affect people within the public sector union who are working with and for the RCMP right now. We want to hear from those individuals who are regarded as civilian members to hear how they would be affected. I have talked with uniformed members of the RCMP and civilian members. There is a variety of views on different issues.

I can assure my colleague opposite that we want to know their views and we want to make sure they are represented.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the previous member's question, because I too have received representations on the issue of civilian members.

Constituent Deneene Curry is one such member. In her email to me she said that civilian members are considered subject matter experts in their fields. They are individuals with specialized training, skill sets that are unique to the RCMP and its environment. She also said that civilian members are required to work various hours during the day, often on short notice, to meet investigational demands or court deadlines. They may be transferred or dispatched in the event of an emergency, disaster, special events such as the Olympics and the G8, or to fill shortages in resources. She is very concerned about what is going to happen to them under this new regime.

I am wondering why the government has not been able to clarify some of that in advance of where we are right now with this bill.

● (1305)

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the purpose of this modernization is to reflect a court ruling, at this point the Ontario Superior Court. The Supreme Court will have something to say on this in the ancillary case, the Fraser case, but it is to do with the labour management regime and the process by which members are represented.

*Government Orders*

That is why the primary focus of this is to have in place the legislation that would make sure that representation for members continues, depending on how this ruling goes. That is why civilian members who in many cases do have very specific training and expertise, which my colleague mentioned, are called on in ways in which perhaps somebody under a public sector union may not be called upon. We want to make sure that they also will have full representation and consultation.

We see this clearly as a collaborative process. It is not meant in any way, shape or form to exclude or limit anybody's ability right now to have their concerns known. In fact, I would say for the member opposite, it can be stated that what we are putting in place actually will improve their situation, because the types of members he is referring to fall under certain grievance and disciplinary procedures which have been seen as somewhat limiting for an employee. This would give them a little more comfort and breadth in terms of having grievances addressed.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Mr. Speaker, I also would like to ask my hon. colleague to discuss the changes that are being considered for the commissioner himself.

In his opening remarks, he talked about more powers being given to the commissioner. Could he elaborate on what powers those might be and why he feels these are necessary at this time?

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** Mr. Speaker, right now in the public service, deputy ministers have certain levels of legislative ability to deal with situations either on the side of grievances or disciplinary issues, and with that increased capability comes increased responsibility.

The commissioner himself does not have some of that leeway. We believe that the commissioner should be fully responsible, just as a deputy minister has responsibility, although it is not a direct 100% comparison, over employees, the implementation of the various policies that affect employees, and how to move expeditiously if some of those processes are not being followed. There is a limitation right now. Just as employees themselves and RCMP members in disciplinary and grievance processes need a little more leeway and need to be able to access more broadly the types of assistance that somebody under a grievance process would have, there has to be a balanced right and responsibility at the level of commissioner. Those are laid out in the bill itself.

These are seen as natural, evolutionary steps in the modernization of a labour management regime. It moves the commissioner into the position of having an equality of capability that would be found at similar levels in other large organizations throughout the public service.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, I recognize that a court decision is what is prompting the action here, but the fact of the matter is that whenever government introduces any type of legislation, there is normally a period of consultation. One would think that the civilian members would have been consulted rather than leaving them out and their becoming alarmed at the government making initiatives without checking with them.

Mr. Deneene Curry and other people I think would have appreciated some sort of statement from the government as to what would happen with them. How many civilian members are we

dealing with throughout the entire RCMP procedures? Were they consulted in any way, shape or form at that stage?

I recognize that when we get the bill to committee, there will be opportunities for people such as Ms. Curry to make presentations to the committee, but I would like to know what sort of consultations, if any, were done prior to this date.

● (1310)

**Hon. Stockwell Day:** Mr. Speaker, the numbers change from month to month but we could use a rough number of about 24,000 people who would be called RCMP members, depending on the fluctuation in hiring that takes place. For instance, over the last almost three years we have put in place the funding to hire 1,500 more RCMP officers all across the country. Whenever that happens there are a certain number of civilian members that have to back up those particular jobs. Overall there are about 24,000 and somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000 would be classified as civilian members.

When a court rules, there is no consultation per se and the court makes a ruling. All parties affected look at it. The principal focus of the ruling is to have a provision in place pending our appeal. If the ruling stands, there would be no effective representation or a staked out framework for representation for any members, be they uniform members or civilian members. That is the principal focus.

As a member of Parliament, I have certainly met with civilian members and have heard some of their concerns. I am sure other MPs have done that also. We want to make sure this is in place and that members, as my friend has mentioned, should go through their own associations to get in their views. This is generally seen as very favourable to all members in terms of protecting them and giving them a greater say in their own affairs.

This is not seen in any way to be limiting any of their freedoms, rights or responsibilities. Certainly at the committee stage we would welcome hearing from members of Parliament who may have heard from some civilian members who may think that is not the case. I would be interested in hearing that. We would want to address it.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-43, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Modernization Act.

At the end of the day, Bill C-43 is all about choice. This legislation, if enacted, would give the RCMP's membership the choice of whether or not they want to unionize and be represented by a bargaining agent.

In my opinion, the membership of the RCMP deserves the choice to make an informed decision as to whether or not a union is the best way in which to represent their views and negotiate on their behalf.

At present, the RCMP is the only police force in Canada not represented by an association. Looking at other police associations across Canada, we can see that they have worked quite well and have given police officers a strong voice, whether it has been fighting for improved working conditions or the gun registry, for example.

*Government Orders*

One thing that is important to keep in mind is that this legislation would not allow the RCMP the ability to strike. Just as it would with other police associations and emergency service personnel, a strike would greatly risk the safety and security of Canadians. A union or an association would exist to bargain on members' needs and members' behalf and represent their views to management.

Whether or not the RCMP should form an association is a longstanding issue, and there are arguments on both sides. Organizations such as the Mounted Police Association of Ontario and the British Columbia Mounted Police Professional Association have been vocal supporters of unionization.

They took this matter to court, and on April 6 of last year an Ontario Superior Court judge ruled that section 96 of the RCMP regulations breached the freedom of association guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The conclusion was that Canada's 20,000 RCMP officers have the right to decide whether they should or should not unionize. That is a choice I believe they deserve to make and are best suited to make.

Now on the other side of that argument, there are some valid issues being raised. There are some individuals within the civilian membership of the RCMP who have expressed concerns. They worry that a future union could lump them in with the officers and that their unique issues and needs may not be appropriately represented.

That is a valid concern and something we should explore in greater detail at the committee stage by having witnesses from all sides come forward to explain their views.

I have before me a letter that was written by the staff relations representative, Steve Raine, chair of the SRR national staffing committee, who raised a number of concerns. Under the category of employee review, which is currently being undertaken by senior management, he indicates in this letter that there has been this type of review in 1995, 1998, 2001, 2004, as well as 2007, and they are under the understanding that it is again being reviewed.

The civilian members feel that not only is it a waste of taxpayer dollars because, of course, it has been reviewed so many times but also the reclassification that could occur as a result would have a serious impact on the operational efficiency of the RCMP and could jeopardize public safety.

They raise this issue of the category of employee review because they also feel it is causing great unease with the regular members at a time when Bill C-43 is also potentially going to dramatically change the entire system of staff representation.

The regular members do not want to be treated like every other police force in the country. The civilian members do not want to be viewed as simply public servants. The letter says, "The RCMP is unique and it is our membership—regular and civilian—that makes it so".

There are concerns being raised by the civilian membership, and I think they have to be taken into consideration when we look at this bill.

Bill C-43 is about more than just giving the RCMP the choice to form an association. It contains a number of other significant changes to Canada's national police force.

• (1315)

It would give the commissioner of the RCMP new powers to appoint, promote, discipline, demote or terminate the employment of members, including commissioned officers. These are authorities similar to those of deputy heads of the federal public service and those of heads of other large police services.

I asked my hon. colleague who presented this bill for his response to giving the commissioner additional powers and he gave his viewpoint on this. There has been concern expressed because of some of the changes that have occurred under the commissioner in the last number of years, and a thorough review of those powers needs to be conducted because we do not want to do something in haste that would cause more concern and more grievance within the RCMP.

The commissioner would also be granted the authority to implement a structured discipline system that would attempt to bring more transparency, consistency and efficiency when dealing with conduct resolution. These changes would be consistent with the discipline systems found throughout other Canadian police services and the rest of the public service.

It is something that needs to be thoroughly investigated at committee stage. We have heard some of the concerns through media reports, including concerns from a whistleblower, on some of these changes to the RCMP and things that have occurred over the last number of years. These powers need to be thoroughly reviewed.

The bill would also establish a total compensation advisory committee, which would provide recommendations to the Treasury Board president on overall compensation of RCMP members not represented by a bargaining agent. A consultation committee would be created to address workplace issues. Members would be given the opportunity to bring their views and concerns directly to managers either individually or as a group. This could include discussing potential workplace improvements or identifying areas of concern. It is just one more way in which communication within the RCMP could be improved.

A public service relations board would be created to act as an independent, external third party, which would make final and binding decisions relating to discipline and grievance issues of the RCMP members. Some issues would not be referable. These would be grievances related to the assignment of duties, law enforcement techniques or uniform standards. Such a board would have to take into account the unique role the RCMP plays as Canada's national police organization protecting Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

*Government Orders*

Bill C-43 is not a small piece of legislation. It is 116 pages filled with clauses that could make significant changes to the structure and operation of the RCMP. Therefore, we must ensure an in-depth study at committee stage to allow witnesses the opportunity to voice their support, concerns and general opinions. For instance, the new powers that would be granted to the commissioner, as I indicated earlier, must be studied further to ensure transparency and accountability.

I look forward to hearing further debate on this bill from all of my colleagues and from witnesses at committee stage. The men and women of the RCMP deserve to decide for themselves whether they feel adequately represented or whether an association would better their working conditions.

As I said earlier, some of the background on the development of Bill C-43 deserves mention. Bill C-43, An Act to enact the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Labour Relations Modernization Act and to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, was introduced in the House of Commons by the hon. President of the Treasury Board in June of this year.

Bill C-43 is a direct response to an April 2009 decision, over a year later, by the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, which found that section 96 of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Regulations breached the freedom of association accorded to RCMP members under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a very important clause.

• (1320)

The decision concluded that under the charter, Canada's 20,000 RCMP officers are entitled to decide whether they wish to bargain with the force's management through a union of their choice or remain under the existing arrangement, which is ultimately under management's control.

As part of the decision, the court struck down section 96, but gave the federal government 18 months to provide a new statutory framework for collective bargaining. This period was to have ended in October 2010, but at the last minute after three previously unsuccessful attempts by the government to obtain a stay of the court ruling, the Ontario Court of Appeal granted a stay lasting up to 30 days after the release of the related Supreme Court of Canada decision involving the rights of farmers to organize. The Supreme Court decision is expected some time this fall or in the spring of 2011.

As I said earlier, Bill C-43, if implemented, would give RCMP members the choice of whether they want to continue to work in a non-unionized environment or pursue the unionized option where they would be represented by a certified bargaining agent. It would also give the RCMP commissioner new powers to appoint, promote, discipline, demote or terminate the employment of all members including commissioned officers, quite significant powers.

It would also establish, as I said earlier, the total compensation advisory committee to provide recommendations to the President of the Treasury Board on the overall compensation, pay and benefits, of the RCMP members who are not represented by a certified bargaining agent. Under a unionized scenario this would include RCMP officers, for example inspectors or the ranks above,

executives or other non-represented or excluded employees of the RCMP.

It would also establish a consultation committee to address workplace issues. Through a series of local, divisional, regional and national consultative committees and/or working groups, members would be given the opportunity to bring their views and concerns directly to managers, either individually or as a group.

The bill, if implemented, would also maintain the existing formal conflict management system whereby options would continue to be offered to resolve conflicts above and beyond the formal grievance process, such as mediation through a third party. The use of these options would be voluntary, confidential and impartial. It would also provide the commissioner with the authority to implement a structured discipline system, which would seek to resolve conduct issues transparently, consistently and promptly.

RCMP members would have the right to refer certain decisions or actions of management to the Public Service Labour Relations Board, an impartial, external decision-making body. As I said, it is a very complex and lengthy bill. It would also establish a Public Service Relations Board as an independent external third party to make final and binding decisions relating to discipline issues and some grievances of the RCMP members.

As I stated earlier, there have been concerns. There has been some stakeholder reaction. For example, the right of the RCMP members to unionize is a longstanding issue and various informal RCMP labour associations such as the Mounted Police Association of Ontario and the British Columbia Mounted Police Professional Association, which were the ones who brought the issue to the courts to begin with, have been particularly vocal on granting RCMP members the right to associate. As part of the temporary court-ordered stay, these groups have also been given access to the RCMP's email system as well as its intranet and intranet bulletin boards to post information about the benefits of unionization.

There have been many pieces of correspondence that have been sent out by these associations to ensure that members of the RCMP have been apprised of their rights. In fact in a member communication, they talk about the historic reason why they have been forbidden to do this and that they really do feel that collective bargaining is essential for members of the RCMP. They talk about collective bargaining simply referring to work-related negotiations between an employer and group of employees that has members of the association permitted to negotiate on their behalf.

*Government Orders*

• (1325)

They talk about some of the successes that these associations have been able to achieve. For example, police associations in Canada succeeded in improving the lives of their members, as they say in their correspondence, and they talk about the elimination of voluntary overtime. In negotiations, for example, in mid-2000, the Toronto Police Association fought to retain an existing minimum staffing requirement of two officers per patrol car. They talk about the Police Association of Nova Scotia, which recently defended its members against a pension deficiency. They talk about the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary from my own riding introducing the public awareness campaign that resulted in an increase in the force's budget, which resulted in the hiring of more officers and improvements in training.

They list these types of achievements of the bond of association, and say that if the RCMP felt so inclined they feel that these associations would be able to bring forward positive changes on their behalf.

They have been bringing forward this issue, speaking not only very strongly in the court-related process but also to members of Parliament on these very serious issues that they feel need to be addressed.

Again, I bring the House back to the staff relations representatives who have an alternate view. They feel that we should rethink this whole move toward an association by the RCMP or at least give them the opportunity to voice their concerns on these matters and give them the opportunity to say why they should not be included in this group or association, why they are concerned about some of the issues around the category of employee review.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I think the bill provides a new labour relations regime for the RCMP, that it should go to committee for further review and further analysis, that we need a fulsome discussion about this issue, bringing forward some of the internal concerns of the RCMP, some of the staff relations concerns, and as well giving the RCMP members and officers themselves an opportunity to come forward with why they feel it may be to their benefit or not to their benefit to come forward in this manner.

I think we also need a full discussion on some of the review panels and the tribunals that are going to be created under this act. I think as well that we have to consider the powers of the commissioner and whether or not they are at the right level of powers, the right actions at this particular time, and how we can move forward to ensure that the RCMP, that most respected institution, is given even a greater opportunity.

• (1330)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I followed this issue for many years. In the province of Quebec the RCMP members of Quebec, the gendarmes, have asked for unionization or an association of some kind for many years.

It is unfortunate that RCMP officers and their group have to go to court in order to facilitate even the discussion of whether or not RCMP members should have the right to join an association or to unionize.

That was problem number one, as to why these fine men and women had to go to court to get what so many other police officers in the country have as their granted right, the right to, if they wish, form an association to collectively bargain for future pay and benefits and for packages for their members and their families.

The other point is the last thing I personally would like to see is the current Commissioner of the RCMP getting any more powers than he already has. As we know, this was a Conservative who was appointed to the RCMP. He never once served a day as an RCMP member. I think that was a tragedy. The Commissioner of the RCMP should be an RCMP member.

When we look at the fact that they were denied VIP services and they were denied many other aspects that veterans get, for example, I think it is sad when a commissioner does not stand up for the men and women in his service.

I would like the hon. member from Newfoundland to comment on the fact that it should be a commissioner from—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. The hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague hit a couple of the key points.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, this is about choice. At least this bill does address the fact that the RCMP has a choice as to whether or not they want to form an association. The RCMP had to go through the court process, associations had to bring forward these issues and I believe the Toronto police had to bring forward these issues to the courts. It is unfortunate that particular point was delayed. It is about choice. Every other police department across the country has that association and has that choice.

The second point the member raises, one that I have raised as well, is on the power of the commissioner and granting the commissioner these additional and pretty wide-ranging powers. If we look to some of the concerns that have been expressed, that my hon. colleague has expressed, I think these are the types of issues that need to be fully vetted at committee.

The third point, and I am sure if he had more time he would have raised it, is on the issue of some of the non-commissioned officers in the RCMP who are concerned about whether or not they are in the right place at the right time on this bill. There are civilians within the RCMP who are concerned about this bill and I think we have to hear from them as well.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was in the labour movement for 28 years and so my bias is very evident.

I am pleased to hear that the Liberal Party agrees with the RCMP officers' right to form a union. I would ask if it supports the right of the RCMP officers to choose the union of their choice.

As well, we have heard a lot about collective bargaining and the representation factor. In the RCMP it is well known that there has been a fair amount of intimidation of late, or at least it was reported as such. Does the member agree that RCMP officers should have the right to have a union representative available to attend all meetings with management?

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure my colleague is very learned in this particular area.

I think he has raised a few points that should be brought up at committee. I very strongly support Bill C-43 going to committee for these types of issues to be reviewed.

As I said, the bill gives the commissioner new powers, helps to establish a board for compensation purposes, establishes the RCMP consultation committee to address workplace issues, and makes the Public Service Labour Relations Board and the external body resolve some of the personnel issues.

Does that go far enough? Are there other issues that need to be addressed? That is why I want to send this to committee to talk about what needs to be done in this act.

From my own personal perspective, I think it is about choice, as I have said at the very beginning. It is for the RCMP officers to make that choice about association and how they go about associating. That is why I am strongly supporting sending this to committee.

• (1335)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have some concerns about this bill as well, and I am sure that we will have ample time to deal with them at committee.

One, the bill dictates that only a bargaining agent that primarily represents workers in the field of policing would be eligible to be certified as the recognized union for RCMP officers. In effect, this is a restriction on the right of the workers to pick whomever they want as their bargaining agent. I would ask the member for her comments on that particular issue.

Second, the bill puts some limits on topics that might be negotiated at the bargaining table, including some substantial components of a contract such as pensions. I would ask the member to comment on whether or not there should be restrictions on what can be negotiated, such as pensions.

Third, there is a provision that gives the Treasury Board the power over the civilian members of the RCMP. They would be put under a separate framework, which violates the rights of those workers to make a free choice. It is all about free choice. We are not concerned about what the choice is, we just want them to have the choice. We want free choice for the civilian members as to how this sees the light of day.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Mr. Speaker, I am hearing that, again, Bill C-43 is not a small piece of legislation. It contains 116 pages of various and sundry significant changes to the structure and operation of the RCMP. That is why I think it needs that in-depth study at the committee stage. The committee can get into some of the issues that my hon. colleague is raising, bring forward witnesses and give them the opportunity to express their concerns or suggest changes that may be required in this bill.

This bill deserves the review and recommendation of going to committee so that it can have the fullness of discussion and debate.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as members know, the RCMP have a tremendous record over the decades of service to Canada, but there have been a couple of unfortunate

incidents recently, such as the terrible tragedy of Mr. Silverfox in my riding.

I wonder how the member thinks the provisions of this bill would affect those situations. Does she think they might have prevented them or that they would make the situations less likely in the future?

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague raises a very important point. The RCMP has had some challenges over the last number of years. In fact, even in my province, this past weekend, we had an issue of a person who escaped from surveillance. It is unfortunate that these things do occur.

I think that my hon. colleague raises a very important question about the future and the roles and responsibilities of the commissioner, the powers that would rest with the commissioner, some of the training issues and some of the freedom of association issues. I think that is the kind of in-depth analysis that needs to be done at committee stage, where we really get into some of these things.

I do not know whether or not this bill would solve all the ills of the RCMP. I sincerely doubt it. However, I think it is a step in the right direction for us being able to address some of those concerns and bring them forward when we are looking at the powers and the responsibilities of the commissioner.

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to be speaking about Bill C-43, An Act to enact the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Labour Relations Modernization Act and to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

I would like to begin by saying that the Bloc Québécois supports this bill. The Bloc will be pleased to discuss and debate this bill in committee with its usual thoroughness.

The Bloc believes that unionization of Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers would lead to more harmonious and fairer labour relations. In addition, it is useful to remember that the Conservatives introduced this bill following an Ontario Provincial Court decision, which was appealed by the government three times.

In April 2009, Justice Ian MacDonnell of the Ontario Superior Court extended the right to unionize to the 22,000 officers in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The judge ruled that the federal law governing the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which prohibits unionization, is unconstitutional. However, police cannot strike because the Canadian Police Association gave up that right.

This decision put an end to a century-old tradition of RCMP management believing that unionization would hurt the officers' morale. This is not the first time that RCMP officers have requested the right to unionize. In 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada threw out the case of Gaétan Delisle, a former officer who invoked the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to allow RCMP members to unionize.

*Government Orders*

This bill introduces human resources management processes for grievance procedures, disciplinary measures and the review of conditions of employment. It also gives the commissioner authorities similar to those given to deputy heads in the federal public service as well as the heads of large police services to support the effective management of the RCMP workforce.

According to the new labour relations regime, RCMP members will be able to choose to work in a non-unionized environment, enabled through joint consultation, or to work in a unionized environment, represented by a certified bargaining agent. As is the case with most police forces in Canada, RCMP members would not be able to withdraw their services.

In either a unionized or a non-unionized environment, the new labour relations regime for the RCMP would include the following features.

The proposed legislation gives the commissioner human resource management authorities similar to those of deputy heads in the federal public service—as I said earlier—and to those of heads of large police services in Canada. This includes the authority to appoint, promote, discipline, demote or terminate the employment of all members, including commissioned officers.

The President of the Treasury Board will establish a total compensation advisory committee to provide him with recommendations on overall compensation, that is, pay and benefits, for RCMP members who are not represented by a certified bargaining agent.

If members choose not to be represented by a bargaining agent, the total compensation advisory committee's recommendations would apply to all RCMP members.

If members choose to be represented by a bargaining agent, the committee's recommendations would only apply to officers, that is, inspectors and ranks above, executives and other non-represented or excluded employees of the RCMP.

● (1345)

The committee would be comprised of up to five impartial and external members who, together, would have an appropriate mix of knowledge of policing operations and of compensation issues and principles.

The total compensation advisory committee shares many similarities with the advisory committee on senior level retention and compensation, which provides, among other things, independent advice and recommendations to the President of the Treasury Board on compensation and overall human resources management matters for executives, deputy ministers, chief executive officers of crown corporations and other Governor in Council appointees.

The proposed legislation requires, among other things, that a consultation committee be established to address workplace issues. This could include the co-development of workplace improvements; that is to say, members could also participate in identifying and collaboratively resolving workplace issues and challenges. Through a series of local, divisional, regional and national consultative committees and working groups, members would be given the opportunity to bring their views and concerns directly to managers, either individually or as a group.

The bill maintains the current informal conflict management system and integrates it into all labour relations processes. This system will continue to offer options to resolve conflicts above and beyond the formal grievance process, such as mediation through a third party. The use of these options would be voluntary, confidential and impartial.

The proposed legislation provides the commissioner with the authority to implement a restructured discipline system. Consistent with discipline systems found throughout other Canadian police services and the broader public service, the new system would ensure that the RCMP is able to address and resolve conduct issues transparently, consistently and promptly. It would give RCMP members the right to refer certain decisions or actions of management to an impartial, external decision-making body, the Public Service Labour Relations Board.

The proposed legislation would include a more timely and effective grievance process. This new process would give members the right to refer certain decisions to an impartial, external, decision-making body, the Public Service Labour Relations Board.

What role does the Public Service Relations Board play in the public service? The legislation proposes that the board act as an independent, external third party to make final and binding decisions relating to discipline issues and some grievances of RCMP members. Members would not be able to refer grievances to the board on issues such as assignment of duties, law enforcement techniques or uniform standards.

To fulfill its role, the Public Service Labour Relations Board will take into account the unique role of the RCMP as a police organization, protecting Canadians and national safety. It will have to ensure it has to the capacity to perform its new powers and functions, including the ability to assign adjudicators who have knowledge of policing and police organizations as required.

The bill is a step in the right direction but the Bloc Québécois has some concerns. There are some issues that could be debated in committee if the bill is passed here in the House. One of our concerns is the definition of “employee” found in clause 2(1). This definition is much too strict. In our opinion, there is no reason to exclude employees who are hired outside Canada, part-time employees, casual employees and students.

● (1350)

These people carry out the same duties as their unionized co-workers but are denied the right of association. Members will recall that the Public Service Alliance of Canada is currently before the courts in order to have the rights of these types of employees recognized under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

It is also worth mentioning that the so-called confidential positions are not defined clearly enough. According to clause 31 and following, people who are in confidential positions are those who have been deemed to be so by the employer. It is then up to the union to prove otherwise. This vague or extremely flexible definition could easily lead to cases of abuse that would ultimately be harmful to labour relations.

*Government Orders*

The bill refers specifically to a certification process. When an application for certification is filed, the board must ensure that a majority of employees in the bargaining unit wish the applicant employee organization to represent them as their bargaining agent. This is a fairly unusual situation and, in our opinion, it places a very heavy burden on the shoulders of the employee organization.

Subsection 29(2) of the Canada Labour Code sets out a mechanism similar to that provided for under section 28 of the Quebec Labour Code. This mechanism involves a representation vote when the board is satisfied that the union has obtained the support of 35% or more of the employees.

In our view, this is a much more realistic approach to truly determining what the employees want. It allows for a vote, when everyone has their say.

Upon reading the bill and the rulings that led to it, we have to wonder what opportunity members of the RCMP will have to join an existing union. The unclear provision, in our opinion, is clause 56 of the bill. We wonder whether its purpose is to ensure that the employee organization actively defends its members or whether it is to limit the organization's role to defending police officers only.

Clause 56 states that:

The Board must revoke the certification of an employee organization as the bargaining agent for the bargaining unit if the Board, on application by the employer or any employee, determines that the organization no longer has as its primary mandate the representation of police officers.

In our opinion, the first solution should be adopted. With the exception of three Canadian provinces, all the other jurisdictions allow their police officers to be part of diversified employee organizations.

As I was saying at the beginning of my speech, this is a step in the right direction. The Bloc Québécois notes, however, that everything in this bill is geared to limiting the number of individuals who can join the ranks of an employee organization. Whether it be by excluding employees whose jobs are not very secure, or by designating confidential positions, there seems to be a real desire to give a limited number of people the right to organize.

What is more, having a certification process that is different from what is done under the Canada Labour Code and in other provinces shows the government's desire to make the certification process difficult.

• (1355)

The confusion around a number of definitions and clauses in the bill also reflects the government's attitude. We sincerely believe that with some amendments, Bill C-43 would benefit RCMP employees. In committee, we will be able to question witnesses and move and debate amendments.

Needless to say, I do not believe the government was too happy about introducing this bill. I do not get the feeling the Conservatives like unions much. I think they moved second reading of this bill quite reluctantly. In their plan to help the auto sector, the Conservatives wanted to include a condition that would have imposed a salary reduction, in spite of the collective agreements in effect.

I have another example to back up what I am saying. In the 2009 budget, the Conservatives included an amendment to the collective agreement for public service employees that unilaterally imposed new salary conditions on some public servants. This provision is found in part 10 of Bill C-10. They also voted against Bill C-395 introduced by the Bloc Québécois, which would exclude the period of a labour dispute from the employment insurance qualifying period. This bill is designed to fill a gap that, in theory, could be used by an employer to pressure a union.

Lastly, the Conservatives have always been opposed to anti-scab legislation, which once again puts workers at a disadvantage compared to employers.

This bill should be debated in committee so that we can improve it and propose amendments to give police officers and RCMP personnel the opportunity to unionize and defend their rights fairly, rigorously and effectively.

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on her excellent speech that clearly explains the Bloc Québécois's position on unionization, especially for this group of people who work for the government and enforce the law across the land.

The issue of unionizing members of the RCMP comes up often. The last time it came up, it was studied by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. We were told of a problematic and distressing situation for many members of the RCMP. Senior officials had been involved in an embezzlement scheme. Several years ago, they had taken money out of an insurance plan and put it into a retirement plan, or vice versa. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts made a number of comments and recommendations on the matter. According to one of the recommendations, unionizing RCMP members would diminish the risk of such situations happening again and would correct them before they ever happened.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about this situation in particular.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He is our critic on the Standing Committee on International Trade and he always has very pertinent questions. He diligently represents his voters.

In response to his question, I would say that the point here is that they are being forced to introduce the bill. The government was forced, in a way, to introduce this bill. It is not pleased about it and has its doubts. We know that the Conservatives are no friend of the unions and do everything possible to limit their ability to intervene. Therefore, the bill before us, with over one hundred clauses, must be analyzed and debated with fairness and rigour to provide RCMP officers with appropriate and effective working conditions and representation.



*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

● (1400)

[English]

**COMPASSIONATE VOLUNTEERISM**

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Waterloo region, including Kitchener Centre, was built on a merger of the ideal of hard work with the ideal of compassionate co-operation.

Our Governor General, who spent many years in our community, referred to this as a “barn-raising” mentality.

Our heritage also includes an ability to see past appearances and accents, to treat every person as valuable. These ideals have made Kitchener-Waterloo the economic engine of Canada. People are asking, “What is in the water in Waterloo region?”

Let us celebrate the Kitchener ideals of hard work, compassionate co-operation and respect for every person.

I want to pay special tribute to Connie Dietrich, a constituent who recently lost her life. Connie lived out these ideals with conviction, dedicating 15 years of her life to volunteering in palliative care.

I am very proud to be the member of Parliament for the great community of Kitchener.

\* \* \*

**COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERISM**

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to pay tribute to an outstanding constituent in my riding of York West.

Paul Nguyen is a proud Vietnamese Canadian, living in the Jane-Finch area, who has dedicated his life to ending discrimination in at-risk and marginalized communities. As a volunteer, Paul has helped to give residents a strong voice and to combat negative stereotypes.

Recently Paul was awarded the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship from the Lieutenant Governor. This adds to an already impressive list of awards, which includes the 2010 Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the 2010 Canadian Ethnic Media Association award of excellence in ethnic Internet journalism, and the 2009 William P. Hubbard Award for Race Relations from the City of Toronto.

Paul Nguyen is someone who has made a life of giving back to his community and to our community. I would like to send a special note of personal thanks for all he has done and all he continues to do.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**POSTAL SERVICES TO DEPLOYED TROOPS**

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, for the fifth consecutive year, Canada Post is offering free delivery of letters and parcels to troops deployed in war zones overseas.

Until January 7, 2011, Canada Post's 6,600 post offices will offer free parcel service for family and friends of Canadian Forces

members currently in Afghanistan and other overseas theatres of operations.

It is particularly hard to be separated from loved ones during the holiday season, which is filled with festivities and visits with family and friends. This is why receiving mail can be comforting.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I would like to salute the efforts and especially the courage of our men and women in the service. May the new year bring them peace and serenity.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PUBLIC SECURITY PERSONNEL**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, at this time, prior to the Christmas season, I would like to stand in this House and give special tribute to all those veterans and their families, to all those RCMP members, to those emergency responders, those firefighters, those paramedics, and to all our military men and women serving overseas, to wish them and their families a very merry Christmas and very happy new year.

These are the people who allow all Canadians to have a good night's sleep.

I would also remind all my hon. colleagues in the House of Commons to make sure that when they are in the malls or in the stores or on the street corners, in big towns and small communities, from coast to coast to coast, they put a little bit of change in the Salvation Army kettles, because this is the one organization that does not ask questions; it just looks to the humanity of the season.

If we all give generously this year, then maybe everyone in Canada will have a very warm and generous Christmas. God bless.

\* \* \*

**CENTRE DUFFERIN DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL WAR MEMORIAL**

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize four exceptional students: Alissa Droog, Alexandra Berry, Sarah Callaghan, Corah Lynn Hodgson, and their dedicated teacher, Mr. Neil Orford.

On November 10, after two years of tremendous effort, their vision to honour former students of Centre Dufferin District High School who served or are serving in Canada's armed forces was finally realized.

The new granite war memorial, which now hangs in the front entrance of the school, will forever commemorate the sacrifices made for democracy and freedom by our country's finest.

Through their own initiative and under the guidance of their teacher, these four students raised over \$6,000 from the community to make the memorial a reality.

*Statements by Members*

On behalf of the residents of Dufferin—Caledon, and most especially the veterans of the Shelburne Royal Canadian Legion, I sincerely commend these four outstanding students and their enthusiastic teacher for giving our community a special and enduring tribute to veterans, active service personnel and Dufferin military history.

\* \* \*

●(1405)

**TERENCE BAY LIGHTHOUSE**

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Terence Bay Lighthouse Society has been recognized for its community spirit and dedication to preserving local heritage. The Terence Bay Lighthouse, built in 1903, is an important landmark.

Unfortunately, maintaining this iconic historic structure is not a priority for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. Battered by the sea and rain and neglected by the Conservatives, the lighthouse was in a dismal state. It was left to members of the society to repair this landmark when the Conservative government abandoned it.

I hope this will be an example to the minister that maintaining our lighthouses is a priority for the people.

\* \* \*

**CHARITABLE GIVING**

**Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during the holiday season, Canadians share in the spirit of peace and goodwill, but some in our society suffer hardship and isolation and are unable to enjoy what many of us take for granted. At this time of year, charitable organizations are called upon even more as they work to fill the needs in our communities.

Statistics Canada has recently reported that charitable donations have declined in Canada, likely due to the pressures of the global recession. My private member's motion, Motion No. 559, seeks ways to encourage increased charitable giving and to consider new ways to give, such as through donations of private company shares and real estate.

I urge members of the House to support my motion and I ask all Canadians to remember to share generously with those less fortunate in our communities.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ARTISTS IN OTTAWA**

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on November 30, more than 100 artists from Quebec converged on Ottawa to condemn Bill C-32 on copyright. The expedition inspired internationally renowned lyricist Luc Plamondon, who was part of the protest. Here is an excerpt from his poem, which appeared in the media on Saturday:

We had a great trip to Ottawa-land  
Hand in hand, heart in hand  
The whole family was there, great and small  
And I felt like the father of them all!

...

My God, it was swell!

In Parliament's halls  
Our shouts shook the walls  
'Til the fire alarm rang  
And we cleared out again

How irate was our gang!

The Conservative cabal—  
Moore and Harper et al—  
Did not think to greet us  
Or deign to talk to us

Or even to look at us

They answered with sneering  
Our copyright querying  
Taking industry's side  
While claiming to protect the little guy

...

And that  
Was our great trip to Canada!

That was by Luc Plamondon.

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member knows that she may not name members in the House.

The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

\* \* \*

[English]

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH**

**Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, Christians all around the world gathered for the annual International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church to remember those Christians who face violence and oppression every day.

A recent *Toronto Star* article pointed out that Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world. For example, recently in Iraq, more than 50 people died when they were attacked at a church in Baghdad by an armed group called the Islamic State of Iraq.

In many countries, Christians face daily threats of murder, beating, imprisonment and torture, and a further 400 million encounter discrimination in areas such as jobs and housing. It is not acceptable that any religious group should face persecution, and it is not acceptable that 75% of all religious persecution in the world is directed against Christians.

We need to raise our voices for those who cannot speak, by informing the world of atrocities committed against Christians, and we need to honour their courage and their faith.

*Statements by Members***HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Gilad Shalit, abducted during a ceasefire arrangement, has been held incommunicado in Hamas-ruled Gaza for over four years. Accordingly, we call upon the government to ensure that the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Quartet and humanitarian agencies uphold the relevant standards of humanitarian law, including proof of life, visitation rights and communications between him and his family, as a bare minimum.

[*Translation*]

More specifically, we call upon the government to work with the Israeli, French, American and German governments to secure the release of Gilad.

[*English*]

We ask that the Palestinian Authority join in these efforts; that Hamas be held accountable for its international criminality underpinned by its anti-Semitic charter; and that Canada use its good efforts to put an end to these violations of international humanitarian law, to secure Gilad Shalit's release and to return him to his family as a matter of fundamental decency and elemental justice.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

**AEROSPACE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today, the Minister of Industry announced an investment of \$300 million for Pratt & Whitney, a major aerospace company.

This investment will create and maintain research jobs and will also encourage public and private partnerships.

This investment is expected to create and maintain over 700 highly skilled jobs during the project work phase and more than 2,000 jobs during the 15-year benefits phase.

Our government's investments in the aerospace industry give Canadian businesses the opportunity to contribute to major international projects in the aerospace and defence industries, such as the global F-35 program.

\* \* \*

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since the 1930s, the Senate has always respected the will of those elected by the people. That was the case until Conservative senators decided otherwise a couple of weeks ago.

This despite the fact that the Prime Minister said that an unelected chamber should not block bills from an elected one.

I am asking Senator Comeau and all senators to respect the will of the elected Parliament by sending to committee the bill requiring Supreme Court justices to understand the official languages. It is their duty to protect the rights and interests of Canadians, especially minority groups.

The fact that the Conservatives promote unequal rights for anglophones and francophones is unacceptable. The English and the French have equal rights and privileges. They need to understand that formal equality is not true equality.

I call on all Canadians to remind senators how important this bill is for a fairer country for all.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today the Conservative government called upon the coalition headed by the leader of the Liberal Party to stop blocking a bill that would eliminate pardons for serious crimes.

At present, criminals who sexually assault children are eligible for a pardon. That is why last spring we introduced a bill that would eliminate pardons for those who commit serious crimes, including sexual assault. For nearly six months now, the coalition headed by the Liberal Party leader has been blocking the bill in committee. We are calling a special committee meeting this week to force the opposition to vote on the bill.

Canadians can rest assured that the Conservative government will do whatever it takes to ensure that this bill passes and to make our streets and communities safer.

\* \* \*

**HIGH TIDES**

**Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last week, high tides combined with high winds caused a great deal of damage in eastern Quebec in particular.

To make matters worse, on December 9, the helicopter transporting Government of Quebec experts, namely from the public safety and sustainable development department, over the Gaspé Peninsula to assess the damage crashed in Cap-Chat. Among the passengers was Pascal Bernatchez, geography professor at UQAR and Quebec research chair in coastal geoscience. Fortunately, thanks to the pilot's experience, everyone survived and no one has any life-threatening injuries. In any event, we wish them a speedy recovery.

As people assess the damage and begin reconstruction, the Bloc Québécois wants to commend the courage of all the victims affected by these high tides and the efforts made by municipal authorities and volunteers to lend a helping hand.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this past month we paused to reflect on the 1932-33 famine genocide executed by Soviet dictator Joseph Staline against the Ukrainian people.

Today I stand with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and urge the Canadian Museum for Human Rights to include a permanent display devoted to the Holodomor.

### Oral Questions

The museum is set to open its doors in 2013 in Winnipeg. Now is the time for the Content Advisory Committee to commit to a permanent exhibit to commemorate the many Ukrainian lives that were lost.

As we in the House of Commons and the thousands of Ukrainians in Winnipeg remember and pledge that “never again” will finally mean never again, let us allow all Canadians and the world the chance to learn about the Holodomor at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

### JUSTICE

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Vancouver residents woke up to yet another example of why the coalition needs to stop blocking legislation to make our streets and communities safer. Early Sunday morning, 10 people were shot in an outrageous display of brazen violence, believed to be gang-related.

Our Conservative government is committed to making our streets and communities safer. We need to make it clear that violent crime will not be tolerated on our streets. In the spring we introduced legislation to eliminate pardons for serious offenders. Sadly, the coalition has been blocking this legislation at committee for nearly six months. It is obvious that the Liberal-led coalition cares more for the rights of criminals than for law-abiding citizens. That is why we are calling a special committee meeting to force the opposition to vote on the bill. This will take place on the six-month anniversary of the bill being sent to committee.

Canadians can rest assured our Conservative government will do everything possible to protect Canadians against violent crime.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, clearly, the purchase of fighter jets without a competitive bidding process would be a huge mistake. Not only would a competitive bidding process give us more jobs and more industrial benefits, it would also save taxpayers billions of dollars.

Why is the government letting the Americans choose our aircraft at the expense of our industries and our taxpayers?

[English]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course, nothing could be further from the truth. There was a competition. In fact, the competition took place under the tutelage of the party of the Leader of the Opposition.

In fact, what we are seeing here is a win-win situation. It is certainly a win for the Canadian Forces for the new state-of-the-art aircraft, the fifth generation aircraft, the only one available to our country. For the Canadian aerospace industry there is the potential for contracts of up to \$12 billion and 150,000 jobs. This is great for

the Canadian economy. I do not know why the Liberal leader opposes it.

**Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the defence minister's credibility on this issue is in tatters. On May 27, he promised Parliament an open and competitive bid. On July 16, he reversed himself. He made one estimate for the maintenance costs of this airplane. It has now more than doubled. He has overplayed the industrial benefits, downplayed the cost. None of his numbers about this plane add up. When will he put a stop to this boondoggle in the making?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know why it is every time push comes to shove, every time the issue is about getting the Canadian Forces new equipment to protect them, to promote their interests and Canada's interests abroad, the Liberal Party is against it. We saw it with the EH-101 cancellation. Now we are seeing the same thing again, a page ripped out of the 1993 red book. When they cancelled that contract, it cost the country \$1 billion.

Here we have a chance to improve upon that record. We could have the Liberal Party be consistent for a change and support the Canadian Forces and the equipment needs that they have.

**Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is about value for taxpayers' money. I defy the Minister of National Defence to tell the Canadian people what this plane will actually cost. In the United States the estimates go from \$50 million, to \$95 million, to \$125 million. The maintenance contract estimate goes from \$5 billion to \$12 billion. This is an issue of credibility. No number the government presents on this issue is credible.

How can the Conservatives ask the taxpayers to foot the bill without a competitive bid?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us look at the actual contract. What the Canadian government has committed to is a \$9 billion contract for the acquisition of 65 fifth generation aircraft. This includes not just the aircraft, but also includes the onboard systems, supporting infrastructure, initial spares, training simulators, contingency funds. This is a terrific investment for the Canadian Forces.

The members opposite have changed their position. When the Liberals were in office they began this process. With \$12 billion in potential contracts and 150,000 jobs, how can the Liberal Party oppose that type of progress?

*Oral Questions*

• (1420)

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in order to be the Minister of National Defence, a person must be both competent and honest. We talk a lot about the taxpayers' money. The facts contradict the minister on the issue of the F-35s. There was no competitive bidding process in Canada to choose a new aircraft, and the cost per aircraft is not guaranteed. In addition, the industrial benefits are not guaranteed, and the total cost is uncertain.

Is the minister incompetent or is he deliberately deceiving Canadians?

[English]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see the member bring such a class act to the House prior to Christmas.

Let us listen to what Claude Lajeunesse of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada had to say about the production of 3,000 to 5,000 aircraft. He said, "This amount represents more than \$12 billion in opportunities on the partner's fleet...". The association went on to say, "We urge members of Parliament to support the future of our aerospace industry and the 150,000 direct, indirect... jobs it generates".

I do not know why the member from Montreal is opposed to his local aerospace industry and the Canadian Forces' interests.

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, from one class act to another, the minister of defence does not understand his job. He has also deliberately misled Canadians from the beginning. He says that there is no Canadian competition: not true. He says that the price is guaranteed: also not true. He says that we will get \$12 billion in industrial benefits: prove it. He says that the whole project will cost \$16 billion: again, prove it.

Does the minister need some help on how to do procurement properly? I will give him a hand. So far there has been nothing but monumental incompetence.

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie, who is a former astronaut and a former member of the Canadian Forces, continues to ignore the interests of the local aerospace industry, if he continues to belittle the former colleagues he had in the Canadian Forces and the pressing equipment needs they have, calling them generals' toys, if he continues to do all of this, his constituents in Montreal and the local aerospace industry just might say, "Montreal, there is a problem".

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[Translation]

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a few days ago at the Cancun summit, the international community came to an agreement in principle that is consistent with the Kyoto protocol. Despite extensive efforts, Canada did not manage to bring down the talks. In order to avoid being isolated

from the rest of the international community, Canada was forced to sign the agreement.

Can the Prime Minister explain what Canada's signature on this agreement means in terms of concrete action to fight climate change? Does the government have a plan or is this nothing but lip service?

**Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada went to Cancun to get results on five issues. I am proud to announce that we made progress on each of Canada's five priorities.

We worked well with the Obama administration and with the Europeans. We made progress. It is critical that major polluters help us in our efforts to achieve an absolute reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. We have real progress in mind for next year.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, all scientists agree that global warming should not surpass 2°C. To ensure that, industrialized countries must reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 25% to 40% compared to 1990 levels. The Conservatives' so-called target of 17% compared to 2005 levels would actually be an increase of 3% compared to 1990 levels.

Does the minister realize that the target set by his government contradicts the Cancun agreement?

• (1425)

**Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if we want to reduce greenhouse gases, we must stabilize them over the next five to ten years. It is also essential that all of the major polluters actively participate. We are making significant progress and we are working very well with the Obama administration and the United Nations. If other countries joined us, we could achieve real results for our planet.

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#### HIGH TIDES IN EASTERN QUEBEC

**Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last week's devastating high tides are indicative of an increasingly frequent challenge facing coastal communities, including those on the east coast of Quebec.

In light of the increase in such natural phenomena linked to climate change, can the government assure us that it will do everything possible to combat increased shoreline erosion and that it will provide funding for regions along the river to adapt to climate change?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a difficult situation for those who have recently experienced flooding as a result of the fall high tides. Our government always stands beside the people. I am sure that the Bloc Québécois above all does not want us to take the place of the provinces and be the first to intervene. The province must do its job. There are federal programs. The province will be able to apply to the federal government for assistance in the proper way, through Public Safety Canada.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the City of Rimouski is a marine technology hub that already has important research structures such as the UQAR coastal geoscience research chair, and its director, Pascal Bernatchez.

Would the federal government agree that this is a fine opportunity to develop a research centre on climate change that has serious consequences on maritime regions?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, our government recently made a number of announcements in Rimouski to intertwine the marine technology hub and strategy with the development of Rimouski and the Université du Québec à Rimouski.

That said, we must congratulate the first responders on the scene who helped the people affected by this crisis. Of course our government, through the Department of Public Safety, will be there, as usual, to support the people.

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[English]

**FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada is saying that Canadians are overstretched in terms of debt, that they now owe \$1.48 for every \$1 they earn and that the personal debt risks are destabilizing the whole economy.

The Prime Minister is lecturing Canadians not to go into debt, but his own policies make it worse. He slaps on the HST and refuses to take action against gouging credit card companies.

When will the government pass binding new laws to protect Canadians as we head into this season when they are supposed to be buying a few things for their families? When is he going to protect them from the gouging credit card companies?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we clearly do not want Canadians to be overextended on credit. Ensuring Canadians can make financial decisions is a priority for our government. That is why in the budget in 2009 we created the financial literacy task force. It has been hard at work the past almost two years and will report early in the new year.

We also introduced credit card reform to ensure Canadians would have the information they needed. Canadians can see that now on their credit card forms they get every month. They can see exactly what it costs to carry balances and so on. Information is power.

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians can now see that they are being gouged even more with a larger font size, thanks to the government.

[Translation]

The latest welfare report describes a dramatic reality.

Those receiving welfare today are living in worse conditions than 10 years ago. They are living below the poverty line. The economic

crisis is going on and on. An increasing number of Canadians no longer have access to employment insurance benefits.

Why are we abandoning those in need and letting the provinces bear the burden of social protection—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have seen some great economic progress in the last 16 or 17 months, the creation of some 441,000 net new jobs. However, the job is not finished. There are still far too many Canadians looking for work. The very best social program, everyone would acknowledge, is a job.

That is why we have Canada's economic action plan, a plan designed to reach out and to ensure that economic growth continues in Canada. More work has to be done. We are pleased to work with the provinces. We also acknowledge that social policy is a provincial responsibility and the federal government can play an important role.

However, I would remind the member opposite that we must respect provincial jurisdiction. He should ask his—

● (1430)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth.

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**FOREIGN TAKEOVERS**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when Vale took over Canadian icon Inco, it was a takeover with conditions. Those conditions were designed to protect Canadians, workers and their communities. However, according to reports today, Vale broke its deal with the government and broke its word to our communities and to all Canadians. The minister's response: silence.

The government cannot be counted on to protect Canadians from predatory foreign investment. Why did the minister allow Vale to break its conditions, to break its word, to violate its own signature and to break the rule—

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

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before the hon. leader gets on his soapbox too far, I do not know what the hon. member is talking about. It did not break any of its preconditions or any of its undertakings. Therefore, the report he relies on and his excellent research for question period is absolutely flat out wrong.

## HEALTH

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the views of the Prime Minister on the health care system are well known. Instead of defending our public health care system, the Prime Minister has argued for the scrapping of the Canada Health Act. Last year he had a chance to defend our system against Republican attacks in the U.S. He stood idly by and let the lies persist.

The federal government has a role and the jurisdiction, along with the provinces, in health care. Therefore, the federal government must track its path into the future.

Why are the Conservatives missing in action?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the statements are ridiculous. Our government is committed to a universal public health care system that respects the Canada Health Act. The provinces and territories are responsible for ensuring the delivery of insured health services in compliance with the act. They are responsible for investigating any infractions to the Canada Health Act.

Our government will continue to make investments to the provinces and territories. This year alone we have increased the transfers by 6%.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since 2006, the Conservatives have not given one extra dime to health care. The scary thing is not just their inaction, but their opposition to a kind of plan which would improve our health system.

A national family care plan would do just that. Instead, the Conservatives say that easing the load of the hospitals would be reckless, that improving the financial stability of our public system would be reckless and that helping 600,000 families care for their loved ones at home would be reckless.

Not having a plan is what is reckless. Where is their plan?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we continue to make health care a priority. Under the Liberal government, I recall cuts to health care to provinces and territories. We have increased transfers to the provinces by 6% every year to \$25 billion this year alone. Additional investments were made with H1N1, medical research, food and product safety, wait times, electronic health records and aboriginal health.

We are committed to supporting our provinces.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIPS

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are taking \$121 million away from students, money that was intended for the millennium scholarship fund. This \$121 million disappeared without a trace, wasted by this government without governance.

Now that artists, women's groups and seniors have been targeted, it is students' turn to pay the price of the Conservative government's fiscal incompetence.

## Oral Questions

Why did the Conservatives put an end to the millennium scholarship fund, a program that has proven to be beneficial to Canadian students?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we did. We took the money in the fund that had not been spent and we used it to increase the donations given to students, donations that benefit 280,000 students or nearly twice as many as the Liberal program did.

• (1435)

[English]

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every government in the world seems to know that education is the cornerstone to the new economy, except the Conservative government, which has no plan.

The Canadian Council on Learning was building an educational road map. The government killed it. The Millennium Scholarship Foundation was doing world-class research and helping students. It killed that. It took the \$120 million and put the exact same amount into government propaganda. Instead of giving students a hand, it gave itself a hand.

How does that prepare Canada for the new economy?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should be given a hand for his distortion of the facts.

Let us face it. There were \$120 million that was not spent by the millennium scholarship fund. We took that and invested it in our Canada grants program, which now is benefiting 280,000 students with grants. That is almost double the number that were benefiting under the millennium scholarship fund. These are grants that they do not have to pay back. We want to ensure that they graduate with the lowest possible debt load and that we have the best educated, most skilled flexible work force in the world.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government is sitting on a report that recommends improving the lives of seniors by making access to the guaranteed income supplement automatic. It was about time the government woke up. The Bloc Québécois has been calling for this measure since 2001, when we learned that nearly 70,000 Quebecers were being deprived of the guaranteed income supplement even though they were entitled to it.

What is the government waiting for to automatically grant the guaranteed income supplement to older people who are entitled to it?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, no government has done as much as this government to help our seniors, who built this country. That is why we expanded the GIS program. We are making renewal of this program automatic through the filing of income tax forms. This measure will help seniors, which the Conservative Party is already doing very well—better than the other parties.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, they are talking about making initial access to the guaranteed income supplement automatic. Automatic payment of the GIS is a good start. However, if we want the guaranteed income supplement to really fulfill its role, it must be improved.

Will the government increase the guaranteed income supplement by \$110 per month in the next budget, as called for by seniors and by the Bloc Québécois?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, we offered seniors who receive the guaranteed income supplement an increase in the exemption from \$500 to \$3,500 in order to put more money into their pockets, and the Bloc Québécois voted against that initiative.

It voted against seniors. How shameful.

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**CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while the government is refusing to disclose the facts about the scandal at Revenue Canada, we have learned that an official working in the investigations unit was beaten up. It seems that the investigation into collusion between Canada Revenue Agency officials and construction companies is bothering the criminal element.

Can the minister tell us how many officials at the Montreal office are being targeted by the investigations, how many were laid off and what level of responsibility they had?

[English]

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, due to privacy concerns, I cannot comment on the specific employees. However, I can tell the hon. member that we take the safety and security of our employees very seriously, and we will ensure that they are safe at all times.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, two of Tony Accurso's companies and numerous smaller companies created specifically to generate false invoices have been caught so far. It is not known how many other businesses outside of this network were able to benefit from the complaisance of corrupt individuals plaguing the Canada Revenue Agency.

Can the Minister of National Revenue tell us how many businesses like Tony Accurso's benefited from this fraudulent system?

• (1440)

[English]

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said before, these are ongoing issues of investigation, and I cannot comment on that.

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**CANADA-U.S. BORDER**

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as members of Parliament, we have been elected to represent our constituents in discussions on the big issues affecting our country, like Canadian sovereignty.

Yet the government is engaged in secret backroom negotiations on the so-called perimeter security proposals that could result in vast changes to our sovereign right to determine who gets in and who gets out of our country.

After softwood lumber, climate change and F-35s, how can Canadians trust this government to negotiate anything and maintain control of our own borders?

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know my hon. colleague does not expect me to answer a question based on media speculation. However, I can say that our government always puts the interests of Canada first.

Since we took office, we have been focused on creating jobs and promoting economic growth through free, open and secure trade. That means our shared border is open to trade and investment but closed to security and terrorist threats.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just because the government cannot manage our foreign policy does not mean that it should simply abandon it.

The American government continues to believe that Canada is a haven for terrorists, which is untrue.

Will this myth limit the rights of Canadians to determine their own border policies and their right to cross this border as they please?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will not answer a question based on media speculation, but I will say that, contrary to the Liberal leader's coalition with the Bloc Québécois, this government will always stand up for Canada and for Canadians.

I will say again that Canada is the top export destination for 34 American states. More trade flows between Windsor and Detroit than through any other border crossing in the world, and we intend to keep that border crossing open and secure.



*Oral Questions***HAITI**

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the suffering in Haiti continues to grow as cholera continues to spread and a disputed election holds the country's future in the balance. In particular, the women of Haiti have experienced incredible misery. Since the earthquake, rape and gender-based violence, already a crisis for Haitian women, has become an epidemic.

What has the status of women minister done to prioritize the needs of Haitian women in discussions with her cabinet colleagues?

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that there is always a concern about the protection and safety of women in all the countries where Canada is working, particularly in Haiti.

We have set up protection centres, not only for women but also for their children, as well as ensuring that senior women have access to needed food and medicines and ensuring that women's access to food and basic necessities is always foremost in the minds of those we work with.

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Haiti is in a major political stalemate. This morning there was a meeting between the Mexican foreign secretary and Secretary of State Clinton. Cholera is another part of the reality. I know that there is talk of a resolution through a recount, but the main candidates are against that idea. Ms. Manigat and Mr. Martelly are against it.

What role does Canada intend to play in resolving this political stalemate?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again I thank my colleague for his question and his contribution to communications on this crisis.

Our government continues to stand with the people of Haiti as they rebuild their country. We are all concerned with the violence that has taken place following the release of the preliminary election results. Indeed today the Minister of Foreign Affairs met with the U.S. Secretary of State and the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, and they agreed to continue to work together, to collaborate and to encourage all political actors in Haiti to fulfill expectations of them.

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●(1445)

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, currently criminals who commit sexual offences against children are eligible for a pardon. Victims and law-abiding citizens think this is unacceptable, and our Conservative government agrees.

Could the Minister of Public Safety update this House on the government's plans to move forward with this important bill?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nearly six months ago, our Conservative government introduced legislation that would eliminate pardons for dangerous criminals.

Unlike the Liberal-led coalition, we do not put the rights of criminals before those of victims.

Our Conservative members on the public safety committee have called a special meeting to advance this important bill, a bill that would prevent those who commit sexual offences against children from ever receiving a pardon.

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**CANADA-U.S. BORDER**

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while North America's foreign ministers meet in Wakefield, it is what is happening in the backrooms that is really concerning Canadians. A deal to give the U.S. access to personal information of Canadians and more influence over our security and immigration laws is apparently in the works. Even with this government, it is shocking that our sovereignty and private information would be secretly signed away.

What exactly is in the plan? When will it be made public? When will this Parliament see that to debate and discuss it?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is of course always concerned about the safety and security of our citizens. We also understand that in order to grow our economy, we need to work together with our allies and especially our closest ally, the United States.

We want to see an open border that ensures that there is traffic between our countries in terms of legitimate goods and travellers and yet ensures that our joint security interests are protected.

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**AFGHANISTAN**

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we would like to see an open debate.

However, the Conservatives and the Liberals claim that in Afghanistan, one of the roles is to provide security for development, but most Canadians would be surprised to hear exactly how we are providing that security. The Dahla Dam, Canada's largest development project in Afghanistan, is being entrusted to a private security firm with drug trafficking ties, a firm that the U.S. has blacklisted.

Will the government explain why Canada's precious aid dollars are actually going into the pockets of drug traffickers?

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that my colleague, a member of Parliament, cannot be proud of the work that Canada and Canadians are doing in Afghanistan. The Dahla Dam is helping those who live in the agricultural area and will provide increased food.

*Oral Questions*

The security of all of our projects is the responsibility of our partners. They must abide by Canadian laws and regulations. We are assured that the protection needed for this work to continue, the protection needed by our humanitarian workers, is going to be provided responsibly.

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[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development is not renewing a pilot project to ease the criteria for employment insurance. She says she would rather offer more training.

By denying young people and workers in unstable job situations access to employment insurance, the minister is denying them training because in order to access Emploi Québec programs, the unemployed must first qualify for employment insurance.

If the minister wants to train more workers, does she realize that she must first ease employment insurance criteria?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is wrong. It is true that we believe the best way to help people is to prepare them for the workforce. That is why we have invested more in training than any other government before us. Under the economic action plan, 1.2 million Canadians have received training.

• (1450)

**Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development claims to want to train more workers, the Canada summer jobs budget has not been indexed since 2006. If we consider the cost of living increase and the minimum wage increase—\$1.75 in Quebec—there is a \$26 million shortfall compared to 2006.

Will the minister improve the Canada summer jobs program in order to maintain the number and duration of internships offered to students?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we did during the past two summers.

Our economic action plan recognized the difficulty students have finding employment. That is why we added \$2 million each of the two years to help students and create more than 3,000 additional jobs.

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[English]

**ELECTIONS CANADA**

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it appears that the in-and-out scheme was not the only way that the Conservatives cheated in the 2006 election. The Conservative Party used local riding spending allowances on regional campaign offices that worked almost exclusively on the national campaign. This cheating allowed it to spend over \$100,000 more than the rules allowed.

Can the minister responsible confirm that Elections Canada has launched an investigation into two of the Conservative Party's regional campaign offices?

The Conservatives do not like that very much, do they?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, may I begin, on behalf of the government of Canada, by commending the member for her extraordinary passion in this House. We disagree, however, with Elections Canada on this matter.

In unrelated matters, it is important to note that Elections Canada has been wrong in its classification of expenses. In fact, two courts have already ruled against Elections Canada and in favour of the Conservative Party.

[Translation]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have the right to know whether political parties cheat during elections by fraudulently circumventing spending limits established by law. According to the chief electoral officer, that is precisely what the Conservative Party regional offices were being used for.

Is the minister responsible waiting for another RCMP search of Conservative Party offices before requiring his government and his party to stop cheating? Is that what he is waiting for?

[English]

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member did not hear my last answer because I already pointed out that we disagree with Elections Canada on this matter and that, in unrelated matters, it is worth noting that Elections Canada has been wrong in its classification of expenses. In fact, two courts have ruled against Elections Canada and in favour of the Conservative Party.

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**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the F-35 fiasco continues to grow. The choice for this jet was made without competition behind closed doors.

The minister has said that F-35 maintenance over 20 years will cost \$5 billion. His parliamentary secretary has said \$7 billion. However, in 2009, DND told industry that the cost would be \$12 billion. Meanwhile, a competitor, Saab, told the defence committee that its maintenance costs would total \$1 billion over 20 years but it did not even get a chance to bid. That is a big difference.

When will the government come clean, show us its math and stop pulling numbers out of thin air?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong on all fronts. We have said all along that we expect the cost of sustaining the F-35 will be in the same order of magnitude as the current fleet when we factor in the 2016 dollars. This will be in keeping with the projections that we have maintained all along. A 20 year contract would mean somewhere between \$5 billion and \$6 billion.

Members should keep in mind that as more countries decide to purchase the F-35, which they may very well, this will bring the price down for Canada. It is a win-win situation for the Canadian Forces. It is a win for the aerospace industry. I wish members opposite would support the Canadian Forces in this important purchase.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are sick of the Conservative government playing fast and loose with numbers.

Wild claims about 16,000 jobs simply do not add up. An industry witness told the defence committee last week that the number of jobs created, even if \$12 billion in work were obtained, would only be about 1,800 jobs, and even those would not all be new jobs. It is time for the Conservative government to stop its cynical approach designed to mislead the public.

When will the minister stop the fairytales and start telling Canadians the truth about the fighter jet purchase?

•(1455)

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us put aside the partisan rant for a moment.

Claude Lajeunesse of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada said that this was a contract that would give the Canadian aerospace industry the ability to bid on aircraft, up to 3,000 to 5,000. He referenced the \$12 billion in opportunities. It was the association itself that referenced the 150,000 direct and indirect jobs that this contract would generate.

The hon. member should take his radio off broadcast and put it on receive.

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**AEROSPACE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today, the Minister of Industry joined the member for Mississauga—Erindale in announcing a \$300 million investment into a \$1 billion project by Pratt & Whitney to develop lighter aircraft engines with more power, better fuel consumption and improved durability.

Would the Minister of Industry please explain to the House how the government's continued commitment to research and development is keeping Canada at the forefront of the international aerospace industry?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** The hon. member is quite correct, Mr. Speaker. That is exactly what I and the member for Mississauga—Erindale did earlier today. We announced a major investment by the Government of Canada through a repayable contribution but also by the industry itself, a \$1 billion R and D investment in the aerospace sector. That translates into 700

jobs for research and development and over 2,000 jobs when it comes to the actual production phase.

We are in favour of research and development, whether it comes to F-35s or whether it comes to the aerospace industry. We are onside with the aerospace sector. When will the Liberals do the same?

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**RAILWAY SERVICE**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government's own review panel found that the central cause of inadequate railway service is excessive railway market power. No one in farming, forestry or mining thinks that this power will magically disappear in the coming years.

Instead of waiting three valuable years, why will the government not immediately legislate to counteract excessive railway market power and ensure shippers receive the rail service that they need and deserve?

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, farmers and shippers across this country waited 13 years for the Liberal government to do absolutely nothing for them. We struck a panel and the Liberals should at least wait for that panel to come out with its recommendations before criticizing. We will wait for those recommendations and we will make the best decision in the interests of Canada when it comes to where we go from here.

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[*Translation*]

**HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government reneged on an agreement it made with the Government of Quebec by refusing to share up to 50% of the cost of widening Highway 175. This refusal to pay represents a double windfall for the federal government. Not only is the federal government paying only one-third of the bill but it will also collect taxes on the third phase of work on Highway 175.

Is the minister going to stop being so stubborn and negotiate a new agreement with the Government of Quebec to fully share the cost overruns of Highway 175?

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. We have come to an agreement with the Quebec government, just like we have come to agreements with all the provincial governments across our great country.

If it were up to the Bloc, there would be no new arenas, no Canada's economic action plan, no highways and no contribution agreement on Highway 175 because the Bloc voted against all of that. The Bloc continues to oppose every good investment this country needs from this Conservative government.

*Points of Order***PENSIONS**

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday, a high court in the United Kingdom handed down a game-changing ruling. Pensioners in that country have been moved to the front of the line of creditors during bankruptcy proceedings. Here at home, Canadian retirees are at the bottom of the list when it comes to claiming the money owed to them.

New Democrat Bill C-501 is at the industry committee right now but the Conservatives have opposed it from the beginning.

What are the Conservatives waiting for? When will they support Bill C-501 and stand with Canadians instead of their friends on Bay Street?

• (1500)

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the expert evidence is very clear.

Once this place starts to retroactively change contracts and retroactively change the priority, then these things are in court for years as other priority bondholders seek to enforce their rights. That is the expert evidence that has been before the Senate and it is the same evidence that will be before the House of Commons.

We are for real and realistic solutions rather than the empty rhetoric of the other side.

\* \* \*

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government wants to punish human smugglers with serious prison time and deport illegal immigrants who pay human smugglers.

The Liberal Party, however, wants to give human smugglers a slap on the wrist and reward the illegal immigrants with Canadian citizenship and the ability to sponsor their entire family into Canada.

The Liberal MP for Ottawa South even said that the arrival of illegal boats of Tamils was a “manufactured crisis”.

Would the minister tell this House what the government is doing regarding human smuggling?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are again hearing the total irresponsibility of the Liberal Party members.

Just like they tell victims of crime that crime is not a problem, they tell Canadians, including immigrants, that illegal immigration and human smuggling are not a problem.

Canadians know better than that. Canadians expect this Parliament to take strong action to stop people from jumping the immigration queue and abusing this country's generosity. They will not allow the Liberal Party's ideology to trump common sense.

We will not allow the Liberals to reward those who abuse our immigration laws and jump the queue. We will take action.

**RAILWAY SERVICE**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, shippers have already waited during three long years of review and the time for the government to act is right now.

[*Translation*]

The shippers have been complaining for years that the rail companies overcharge and under-perform.

Why does the government not take immediate legislative measures to fill the gaps in this service?

[*English*]

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, shippers and farmers waited 13 years of getting nothing from a Liberal government.

I would think that once we had struck a review panel, the Liberals would at least wait for the recommendations of that panel before commenting. Now they are playing politics with farmers and shippers.

We will wait for those recommendations and then we will make our decision based on the best interest of Canada.

\* \* \*

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of two ministers from Manitoba: the Honourable Dave Chomiak, Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines; and the Honourable Steve Ashton, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

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

**The Speaker:** I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the 2010 Killam Prize Laureates: Ellen Bialystok, Mark Henkelman, Ming Li and James Tully.

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

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during members' statements, I was not able to finish reading the poem by internationally renowned lyricist Luc Plamondon. I was only able to quote some lines. As the members will understand, I had to refer to two members of Parliament by name in the text, because they were part of Mr. Plamondon's artistic work. I did not feel I had the right to infringe on his moral rights.

I therefore seek the unanimous consent of the House to table Luc Plamondon's poem, entitled *Our Trip to Canada*, in its entirety.

• (1505)

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table this poem?

*Routine Proceedings*

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** There is no consent.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[Translation]

**CANADA ACCOUNT ANNUAL REPORT**

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Canada Account Annual Report for 2009-10 prepared by Export Development Canada.

\* \* \*

[English]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 32(2), I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, seven treaties, entitled: “Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour”, adopted at Geneva, on June 28, 1930, as modified by the Final Articles Revision Convention, 1946; “Convention concerning Tripartite Consultations to Promote the Implementation of International Labour Standards”, adopted at Geneva on June 21, 1976; “Convention concerning the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health”, adopted at Geneva on June 15, 2006; “Amendments to the Text and to Annexes I, II, III, IV, VI and VIII of the Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution on Persistent Organic Pollutants”, adopted at Geneva on December 18, 2009; “Amendments to Annexes V and VII of the Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution on Persistent Organic Pollutants”, adopted at Geneva on December 18, 2009; “Amendment to Appendices I and II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora”, adopted at Doha from March 13 to 25, 2010; and “Amendments to Appendix III of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora”, notified on May 25, 2010 and July 16, 2010. Explanatory memoranda are included with the treaties.

\* \* \*

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

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

\* \* \*

**IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT**

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-604, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (appeal process for temporary resident visa applicants).

She said: Mr. Speaker, as the holiday season approaches, thousands of Canadians are looking forward to their relatives coming from overseas to visit them and share a few joyous days in Canada.

Unfortunately, one in five visitors will have their applications rejected. No clear reasons will be given, as there are no clear criteria and no minimum standards. Canadians and their relatives are extremely frustrated because they have no idea why they are rejected and what they can do to qualify.

Millions of tourism dollars are also lost because 200,000 visitors are refused entry each year.

My visitor visa fairness bill would provide an appeal so there would be transparency and clear standards for all applicants. Such appeal tribunals are already available to all visitors to England and to Australia. It is time we bring fairness to those who want to visit Canada and their Canadian friends and relatives.

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

\* \* \*

● (1510)

**NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SICKLE CELL DISEASE AND THALASSEMIC DISORDERS ACT**

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-605, An Act respecting a Comprehensive National Strategy for Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassemic Disorders.

She said: Mr. Speaker, my bill, a national strategy for sickle cell disease and thalassemic disorders, addresses the challenges faced by children and adults living with these inherited blood disorders. The bill calls on the Minister of Health to initiate discussions with the provincial and territorial health ministers to develop comprehensive patient care throughout the life cycle, develop national standards regarding universal screening, develop centres of excellence for both pediatric care and adult care, assess best practices for patients to succeed at school and in the workplace, develop information for medical education to prepare health care workers to meet the needs of Canada's diverse populations, develop adequate clinical guidelines and prompt pain management for patients in crisis, establish a program for funding to advocacy groups, and recognize June 19 as sickle cell anemia awareness day in Canada. I hope all hon. members will support the bill.

*Routine Proceedings*

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

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of constituents concerning Saeed Malekpour, who is facing a potential death sentence in the Islamic Republic of Iran. He is in the Evin Prison, and he is calling upon the Minister of Foreign Affairs to intervene with the government of Iran on his behalf.

[*Translation*]

## MILLENNIUM GOALS

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have two wonderful petitions before me.

The first is a petition signed by students and staff at Mgr.-A.-M.-Parent high school in Saint-Hubert. This petition was started by Renée Pronovost, the spiritual life and community involvement leader. The 1,222 signatories are encouraging the government to act as quickly as possible to honour its promise to achieve the eight millennium goals.

## VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition that I have before me was signed mainly by veterans from the Saint-Bruno and Saint-Hubert Canadian Legions. They are asking that the veterans charter be amended to restore the lifetime monthly pension as a means of compensation for injured military personnel.

This petition is an initiative of my colleague, the member for Québec.

[*English*]

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition addressed to the Government of Canada from Canadians of all ages and from all walks of life who genuinely support and value the contributions of our veterans. They regard a veteran as a veteran regardless of where he or she may have served and in what deployment. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to extend the mandate of veterans hospitals to include veterans who have served in conflicts and in peacekeeping operations since 1953, end the clawback of veterans pensions, eliminate the reduction of veterans pensions at age 65, change the widows benefit to a non-taxable benefit, create a veterans advisory panel to provide input on the selection of future veterans ombudspersons, and ensure that Veterans Affairs Canada remains a stand-alone department.

## PREVENTION OF COERCED ABORTION

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am really proud today to introduce this petition that was collected in Winnipeg at Church of the Rock. In a matter of two hours, over 1,167 signatures were collected in support of Roxanne's law, Bill C-510.

I want to thank all the pastors who were engaged in asking for these petitions to be brought in: Pastor Mark, Pastor Tim, Pastor

Keith and Pastor Aubrey. I want to pass along my congratulations to them for finding a way to get 1,167 signatures in a matter of hours. It was very amazing.

[*Translation*]

## SENIORS

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table a petition signed by 648 people who are primarily from the upper north shore, the region of Tadoussac and Forestville, as well as the north shore.

The signatories are calling for an increase to the spouse's allowance and the survivor's allowance and are asking that the federal guaranteed income supplement program be increased by \$110 a month. Those living alone, particularly seniors, are living below the poverty line and are having to ask themselves if they should buy medication or food.

Unfortunately, far too many of our seniors are living in utter poverty.

● (1515)

[*English*]

## AFGHANISTAN

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by dozens of Canadians calling on the government to end Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan.

In May 2008, Parliament passed a resolution to withdraw Canadian forces by July 2011. The Prime Minister, with the agreement of the Liberal Party, broke his oft-repeated promise to honour the parliamentary motion, and furthermore, refuses to put it to a parliamentary vote in the House.

Committing 1,000 soldiers to a training mission still presents a danger to our troops and an unnecessary expense when our country is faced with a \$56 billion deficit. The military mission has cost Canadians more than \$18 billion so far, money that could have been used to improve health care and seniors' pensions right here in Canada.

Polls show that a clear majority of Canadians do not want Canada's military presence to continue after the scheduled removal date of July 2011. Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Prime Minister to honour the will of Parliament and bring the troops home now.

## VALE INCO

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to bring forward the voices of the people of Thompson and Manitoba.

Today I would like to present a petition on their behalf calling for the federal government to stand up for Canadians and Canadian jobs.

On November 17, Vale announced devastating news that they are planning to shut down the smelter and the refinery in Thompson. This announcement means the loss of over 600 jobs and a devastating impact on the community, the northern region and the province of Manitoba.

*Routine Proceedings*

The people of Thompson are saying that the federal government must stand up for them. Not only did the government allow the foreign takeover by Vale, it also gave them a loan of \$1 billion just over a month ago.

People in Thompson and Manitoba are asking: when will the government stand up for the Canadian people rather than foreign companies? They are asking the federal government to stand up and work with stakeholders at the table to save the 600 jobs and the Thompson Vale smelter and refinery.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition urging the federal government to immediately cease negotiating a free trade agreement with the EU until national-wide public consultations have been held.

The EU is seeking to have the Government of Canada implement changes to a number of important policy areas. Provincial and municipal procurement, copyright, telecommunications, cultural rules, postal services, liquor boards, banking and financial regulations all stand to be affected by signing on to the comprehensive economic trade agreement.

In order to ensure that our industry, services and regulations operate in Canada's best interest, the signatories implore the federal government to undertake public consultations before signing this potentially damaging agreement.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Question No. 530 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 530—**Ms. Meili Faille:**

With respect to the Department of Public Works and Government Services (PWGSC) contract for Engineering and Technical Services (ETS): (a) for each task to be completed under this contract, did the contractor perform the task as stipulated in the contract and, (i) if not, for each of the uncompleted tasks, what are the reasons for which the tasks were not completed and what are the details of the paragraphs of the contract that were changed, (ii) if yes, when did the Department confirm the work had been completed for each task; (b) what measures did the Department put in place to ensure that the contractor respected the contract; (c) has the contract already been audited; (d) how many reports did the contractor provide with a progress update on the tasks; (e) when were the reports in (d) presented to the contracting authority and what were their titles; (f) who was responsible for monitoring and approving the transition from the former contractor to the current contractor; (g) what measures were taken by the contracting authority to verify progress on outstanding tasks; (h) did the contractor inform PWGSC of its staffing plans, which included using people hired by the former contractor; (i) ten business days after the contract's start date, (i) how many CVs had been provided, (ii) what were the names of the people suggested by the contractor and how many of them then worked on the contract; (j) was the ETS contract changed and, if yes, what changes were made and on what dates; (k) was the contractor paid for all the services provided before the end of the transition period; (l) regarding the drafting process for the request for proposal, (i) what is the detailed explanation of the process and the milestone dates, (ii) who were the public servants who participated in drafting the request for proposal; (m) regarding the proposal evaluation process, (i) what is the detailed explanation of the process, (ii) what exactly does the "reconfirmation" step consist of, (iii) who were the public servants who participated in evaluating the proposals and approving the choice of contractor; (n) what are the names of the people or specialized companies that participated in drafting the request for proposal and how were these people or businesses selected; (o) what are the names of the people or specialized companies

that participated in evaluating the proposals and how were these people or businesses selected; (p) what are the names of the people or specialized companies that participated in the contracting process and how were these people or businesses selected; (q) did the evaluation documents and relevant computer files remain in the possession and under the control of public servants during (i) the drafting of the request for proposal, (ii) the evaluation of proposals, (iii) the awarding of the contract; (r) can the Department confirm that it still has all the documents in (q) in its possession; (s) regarding the services of a fairness monitor for this contract, (i) who made the decision not to use the services of a fairness monitor for this contract, (ii) when was this decision made, (iii) for what reasons was a fairness monitor not retained; (t) as to a forensic audit, (i) who decided not to refer this file for a forensic audit after allegations of interference and conflict of interest were raised, (ii) when was this decision made and for what reasons; (u) did the office of the Minister of PWGSC, the Minister himself, or his deputy minister have discussions with public servants regarding the content of the request for proposals for ETS, the evaluation of the proposals or the contracting process and, if applicable, (i) what was the purpose of these discussions, (ii) who instigated the discussions, (iii) when did these discussions take place; (v) during the period from February 6, 2006, to June 24, 2008, did the Minister of PWGSC announce he was in a conflict of interest and, if yes, (i) when and with respect to what file, (ii) what was the nature of the conflict of interest; and (w) did PWGSC require that the references submitted by each of the bidders be checked and, if applicable, (i) who was responsible for carrying out the reference checks, (ii) when were the checks done for each of the bidders, (iii) who identified the mention of a company associated with the bidder, (iv) what were the reasons for approving a bid with references to an associated company, (v) was Innovapost Inc. identified in one of the bids?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Public Works and Government Services Canada cannot comment on this matter as it is currently the subject of litigation before the Federal Court of Canada, TPG Technology Consulting Ltd. v. Her Majesty the Queen, Court File No T-494-08.

\* \* \*

[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. 523, 528 and 529 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Privilege*

[Text]

Question No. 523—**Mr. Robert Oliphant:**

With respect to the multiculturalism programs administered by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, since 2006: (a) how many applications for the Community Historical Recognition Program (CHRP) grants and contributions have been (i) received, (ii) accepted, (iii) rejected; (b) for each application to the CHRP that was approved, (i) what was the name of the applicant organization, (ii) how much money was given to the organization, (iii) what was the nature of the approved program or event; (c) for each application to the CHRP that was rejected, (i) what was the name of the applicant organization, (ii) how much money did the organization request in its application, (iii) what was the nature of the rejected program or event, (iv) what was the reason for the rejection, (v) how was the rejection communicated to the group in question; (d) how many organizations in (c) submitted further applications related to any program or event following an initial rejection and how many of these subsequent applications received approval; (e) how many applications for the Multiculturalism Grants and Contributions Program have been (i) received, (ii) accepted, (iii) rejected; (f) for each application to the Multiculturalism Grants and Contributions Program that was approved, (i) what was the name of the applicant organization, (ii) how much money was given to the organization, (iii) what was the nature of the approved program or event; (g) for each application to the Multiculturalism Grants and Contributions Program that was rejected, (i) what was the name of the applicant organization, (ii) how much money did the organization request in its application, (iii) what was the nature of the rejected program or event, (iv) what was the reason for the rejection, (v) how was the rejection communicated to the group in question; and (h) how many organizations in (g) submitted further applications related to any program or event following an initial rejection and how many of these subsequent applications received approval?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 528—**Hon. Albina Guarnieri:**

With regard to charities that issued tax receipts under tax shelter gifting arrangements and all such receipts that were disallowed by the Canada Revenue Agency: (a) what was the name of each charity that issued disallowed tax receipts; and (b) what was the dollar value of disallowed tax receipts issued by each charity in (a)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 529—**Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With regard to security spending for the Vancouver 2010 Olympics: (a) within the overall security budget, what was the total portion of the budget funded by the government in dollars and as a percentage; (b) what amount of the overall security budget was allocated to the RCMP; (c) what amount of the overall security budget was allotted to government departments and agencies other than the RCMP, specifying (i) the name of the department or agency, (ii) the amount of funding it received, (iii) the reason for or purpose of the funding; (d) what is a breakdown by category or kind of expenditure of the RCMP's security budget, including an explanation of the reason for or purpose of the expenditures in each category; (e) at the end of the Olympics, what amount of the RCMP security budget (i) remained unused, (ii) remained unused in each of the categories identified in (d); (f) what about the budgeting process explains any discrepancy identified in (e) between the amount budgeted and the amount spent; and (g) how will any remaining funds be used or reallocated?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Translation]

**REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE**

## SITUATION IN HAITI

**The Speaker:** The Chair has received a request for an emergency debate from the member for Bourassa. I will hear his submissions now.

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 52, I request that an emergency debate be held today during routine proceedings on the extremely tense situation in Haiti at present.

The election results announced on December 7 literally sent shock waves through the Haitian population. Many observers and experts in the international community and in Haiti remain skeptical about voting procedures and the integrity of the election process. It seems clear that the people do not believe the results.

We have also seen an unprecedented wave of violence in Haiti. More than 1.5 million Haitians are currently homeless, the country faces cholera and sanitation problems, and relations between MINUSTAH and the people are strained.

It is our responsibility as parliamentarians to examine the causes of this major crisis and look at what can be done to solve it. Canada has a leading role to play, and it must speak with one voice. Given that Canada stands in solidarity and partnership with Haiti, we must work to that end as responsible parliamentarians and hold this emergency debate.

● (1520)

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for Bourassa for his comments. I also received his letter on the same point. In my opinion, it is possible to hold such a debate, and we will hold it this evening.

[English]

The Chair has received notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood, and I would be pleased to hear the hon. member now.

\* \* \*

**PRIVILEGE**STATEMENTS BY MINISTER AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY  
REGARDING KAIROS

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I am rising under the provisions of Standing Order 48 on a question of privilege alleging contempt of the House by the Minister of International Cooperation and her parliamentary secretary further to a written notice that I gave to the Clerk on Friday.



The core reason for parliamentary privilege is to enable a member of Parliament to discharge his or her function of representing constituents. Within that core is the essential function of an opposition MP to hold a government to account. I will submit that my ability to hold the government to account has been impaired by the Minister of International Cooperation and her parliamentary secretary, who advertently misled Parliament by telling Parliament something that was not true. I will be asking you, Mr. Speaker, to make a prima facie finding that a breach of privilege has occurred.

Specifically, the minister and her parliamentary secretary “deliberately attempted to mislead the House by way of a statement”, and that is taken from O'Brien and Bosc, or in this case a series of statements, and that she and he knew or ought to have known that their statements to the House were either false or an attempt to mislead.

For some time now, I and others have been asking questions about KAIROS' defunding. KAIROS is a church-based non-governmental organization that represents seven of Canada's largest religious denominations working on a range of social justice issues. Its funding was up for review and it had submitted the appropriate application. It was told that it was being reviewed favourably.

Then the rumours to the contrary started to be heard. KAIROS was unfairly slandered as being anti-Semitic by the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. The minister has since withdrawn his remarks. It was then slandered as being anti-mining when all it was trying to do was improve the lives of indigenous people living in poverty.

In question after question, the minister and her parliamentary secretary said that KAIROS did not meet CIDA's funding priorities. On October 28, 2010, the minister stated:

[*Translation*]

After due diligence, it was determined that KAIROS' proposal did not meet government standards.

[*English*]

On April 23 the parliamentary secretary said:

The criteria for the funding for KAIROS is the same as the criteria for funding for anyone else applying for such funding. KAIROS did not meet the criteria. It did not get the funding. There is no surprise there.

On March 15 the parliamentary secretary said:

CIDA thoroughly analyzed KAIROS' program proposal and determined, with regret, that it did not meet the agency's current priorities. This is important.

However, despite these statements which indicate that KAIROS was defunded because it did not fit within the priorities of the government, there are two pieces of evidence to show that this is false. The first is the access to information request, the response for which I would like to table with you today for your consideration, Mr. Speaker. The second is a transcript from the foreign affairs and international development committee from December 9, 2010, which I will also submit.

When looking through the recommendation produced by CIDA for the minister, obtained through the access to information request, contrary to the parliamentary secretary's and the minister's statements in the House, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that CIDA makes an unequivocal recommendation in support of \$7.1 million

### *Privilege*

funding for KAIROS, on the signature approval page of this document, which reads as follows:

Recommendation: that you sign below to indicate your approval of a contribution of \$7,098,758 over four years for the above program.

However, someone has inserted the word “not”. This one handwritten change completely inverts the recommendation. Let me read it again so that the new meaning is clear, “Recommendation: that you sign below to indicate you not approve a contribution of \$7,098,758 over four years for the above program”.

There is no name or initials next to the handwritten “not”. After this line are three signatures: that of Margaret Biggs, the president of CIDA; Naresh Singh, vice-president of CIDA; and the Minister of International Cooperation. A reasonable person looking at the end page would reasonably conclude that all three did not approve of the grant. I submit that this is precisely what the government, the minister and the parliamentary secretary want the reader to believe. They want to develop a narrative that KAIROS did not meet the standards and priorities of the agency, when in fact it did, and that the agency had killed the proposal. Their responses are tailored to establishing that narrative, and that narrative, I submit, is misleading.

In testimony before the foreign affairs and international development committee, Ms. Biggs testified that when both she and Mr. Singh signed the document, the “not” was not there. She further confirmed to the committee that the department had recommended KAIROS for funding, contrary to what the minister and her parliamentary secretary stated to the House. Had the access to information request not been submitted, that misleading narrative would have been sustained.

I practised law for 22 years, and I can assure the House that any lawyer would not allow such a significant change, let alone a fundamental change to be made to a \$7 million document without all three signatories initialling the change. But it gets worse. I will read from the transcript of Thursday, December 9, at the meeting of the foreign affairs committee:

Member: “Madam Minister, you just said that you signed off. You were the one”

Minister: “I sign off on all of the documents”.

Member: “You were the one who wrote the 'not'”.

Minister: “I did not say I was the one who wrote the 'not'”.

Member: “Who did, then?”

Minister: “I do not know.”

Member: “You don't know?”

Minister: “I do not know.”

Member: “That's a remarkable statement.”

At this point my jaw was hitting the floor:

• (1525)

Minister: “I know that the decision ultimately reflects the decision that I would support.”

It goes on again.

*Privilege*

Minister: "I cannot say who wrote the 'not'."

Member: "Was this 'not' put in by some interloper? Is there some override to the minister's decision?"

It goes on:

Member: "So there's a reasonable possibility that you signed off on this, and that someone put a 'not' in later."

Further on:

Member: "It may well, but you just said that you didn't put the 'not' in. I'm assuming your president of CIDA didn't put the 'not' in. There's only one other signatory who didn't put the 'not' in. So somehow or another, a 'not' got put in after possibly all three of you recommended the KAIROS' funding".

Further on:

Member: "Madam Minister, clearly somebody didn't get the memo on priorities because clearly Madam Biggs or the other person to the signatory sent the memo up to you from September through to November. They sent that memo to you, you sat on it for two months, that's fine. That's not an issue. The issue is that they didn't seem to understand what your priorities were, so they didn't get the memo as to what the priorities were. If this reflects government priorities, why is it that the president of CIDA doesn't know what the priorities of the government are?"

I will not carry on with the rest of the interaction between the minister and me, but I just point out that later, and just as concerning, under questioning, the minister could not even say whether or not she had signed this document, if it is an auto-signature or otherwise. In my mind, this should concern us all. If she did approve, why could she not sign the document itself?

We are all aware of the doctrine of ministerial accountability which can be summed up by saying that the buck stops on the minister's desk. Apparently it does not with this minister. Neither she, nor you, Mr. Speaker, nor I, nor this House knows who makes final CIDA decisions.

In order to establish a prima facie finding that a breach of privilege and contempt has occurred, three elements must be present: one, it must be proven that the statements were misleading; two, it must be established that the member at the time knew the statement was incorrect; and three, in the making of the statement, the minister intended to mislead the House.

On page 111 of the 22nd edition of *Erskine May* it states:

The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.

Page 234 of the second edition of Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* explains that in order for a Speaker to find a prima facie case in a matter involving a deliberate misleading statement, there must be "an admission by someone in authority, such as a minister of the Crown or an officer of a department".

On Friday, December 9, I gave the minister the opportunity to retract these statements and possibly clear the record. However, she refused to do so, conduct which is inconsistent with the standards of the House and what the public expects from its members.

She further compounded her difficulties by saying, "The minister ultimately decides what course to take". That statement is patently false. The transcript of the foreign affairs committee says that she not only did not insert the "not", she does not know who did. Somebody is making decisions over there, but it is not the minister.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to remind you of the three requirements needed to establish contempt.

One, it must be proven that her statements were misleading.

We have three statements which are recorded in *Hansard*, one on October 28, one on April 23 and one on March 15, which directly contradict both the documents obtained through the access to information request and the testimony of Margaret Biggs before the foreign affairs committee. Both show that the minister was informed by the president of CIDA, that CIDA had recommended KAIROS for funding and that it did meet the standards and priorities of CIDA, the government, and yet the minister and her parliamentary secretary misled the House into believing that her officials had decided that KAIROS did not meet the standards and that the funding had been turned down by CIDA.

Two, it must be established that the member at the time knew the statement was incorrect.

● (1530)

The Minister of International Cooperation was fully briefed on CIDA's position on funding of KAIROS, which has been proven both in the testimony before the foreign affairs committee and in the documentation obtained through the access to information request. Furthermore, in Ms. Biggs' testimony before the foreign affairs committee she stated that she had recommended to the minister that KAIROS receive the funding and that there was "no confusion on that matter". She even went so far as to say that "My discussions with the minister were quite clear. She did, as she indicated, deliberate on it. She knew what my advice was so she was not misled in any way".

Third, in making the statement the minister intended to mislead the House.

On three separate occasions over a period of eight months the minister and her parliamentary secretary stood in this place and repeated mistruths about the reason why KAIROS funding was denied. This was an intentional narrative and sustainable if the access to information report had not been made. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you would agree this represents a prima facie intent to mislead the House.

May I remind the House that this is a \$7 million grant, an enormous sum of money for the people and organizations involved, and the good that it could do.

At this point, we have a document that contradicts the minister and the parliamentary secretary and the two senior CIDA officials who contradict the parliamentary secretary and the minister. The minister, even as late as last Friday, asserted the minister ultimately decided what course to take. Apparently that is not true with the minister.

One is left with a clear impression that the decision to not recommend was made after the minister's signature had been appended to the document. The minister does not know who put in the interlineations and therefore cannot tell the House who made the decision, when the decision was made and why the decision, approved by the agency and possibly by the minister herself, was reversed.

It is a prima facie case of contempt to mislead members by blaming others for one's decisions. It is misleading to say that one made a decision when no decision was made. It impairs a member's core function of holding a government to account. It erodes the doctrine of ministerial accountability.

In the event that you do make a finding of prima facie contempt, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to move the requisite motion.

● (1535)

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, at the time of these events, I was the parliamentary secretary. At this point, I am simply the member for Kootenay—Columbia.

I do have some information that might be of value.

First, I take note of the three points the member brought to our attention, that the statements were misleading, that the statements were known to be misleading and that the statements were intended to mislead.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw to your attention that at no time in the member's presentation did he make any assertion that the minister made any misleading statements. In fact, I do not doubt for a second that the member, his colleagues and his research people will have combed over every solitary word that the minister may have uttered in the House or outside of the House. I note he did not say that the minister made any statement that misled the House.

With respect to myself, on March 15, I did make the statement that CIDA thoroughly analyzed KAIROS' program proposal and determined that it did not meet the agency's current priorities. For that, I have to apologize to the House. It was an inadvertent mistake on my part. I do apologize. As a person who has been around the House for 17 years, I take that failing on my part very seriously.

Second, the member says that the responses, obviously referring to my responses, because I have clearly determined that the minister's responses were never questioned by the member in his statement just now, were tailored to forward the narrative. This falls into the category of sometimes there is a lot less than meets the eye. In this instance, I was given to the impression that CIDA, as with any agency or any ministry, should take direction from the minister. Had it taken direction from the minister on behalf of the Government of Canada, the recommendation coming to the minister would not have been to recommend. In fact, it would have been against recommending. The fault, then, lies that the agency itself was in fact giving the minister advice that did not reflect the priorities.

I was mistaken. I took a look at the priorities of the government, which by the way I fully support because it gives the government the opportunity to more correctly direct where our funding should go. My presumption on March 15 was that CIDA, as an agency, would have made that recommendation.

### *Privilege*

If we take a look at it, first, the minister has not been cited with any evidence by the member that she made misleading statements and second, I was wrong, I did make a mistake and I apologize to the House. The second point, though, that I knew they were misleading, I have already clearly stated I could not have known. It was simply a mistake on my part. Third, that I intended to mislead, one follows the other, does it not?

With all due respect to the hon. colleague, the fact is this has been a change in policy that has been unacceptable to him, to KAIROS and to other people in that industry, and so be it. That is part of the political process and part of the discourse that we get into.

In fact, there is no place for a question of privilege other than perhaps, should you, Mr. Speaker, choose to censure me as having been a little bit overzealous in my representation of what I presumed CIDA was going to be doing.

In fact, there is absolutely no case for a question of privilege.

● (1540)

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood on his question of privilege.

When using the three criteria cited by my colleague for holding a member of the House in contempt, we would find, I believe, sufficient evidence to indicate that the Minister of International Cooperation, who is responsible for CIDA and its funding decisions, is in fact in contempt of Parliament and that her statements were misleading, that she knew at the time they were misleading and that her statements were intended to mislead the House.

For clarification, I propose to you, Mr. Speaker, that the minister did make a statement, if not more than one, misleading to the House.

It is my proposition that if a member of the House offers a statement that is misleading and knows it to be misleading, the only conclusion at which the Speaker can arrive is that the statement was intended to be misleading.

It is clear, when checking the minister's statements against information obtained at the foreign affairs and international development committee meetings, that the statements made by the minister were misleading and intended to be so.

By way of evidence, I will now cite the debate the minister and I engaged in on October 28 in question period in which I asked:

Mr. Speaker, we have now learned from CIDA documents obtained through access to information and reviewed by the minister one year ago, that KAIROS' objectives are in fact "strategically aligned with our country program objectives".

The question continued:

On September 20 of this year, the minister for CIDA, in absolute contradiction of her own department's findings said, "KAIROS was recently refused funding as it did not meet the government's priorities".

Now that we know the minister's pretext for the KAIROS cuts is false, will the minister now finally restore funding to this organization?

*Privilege*

In her response to my question, the minister said, “After due diligence, it was determined that KAIROS' proposal did not meet government standards”. Remember, now, on September 20, she said, “KAIROS was recently refused funding as it did not meet the government's priorities”. She has made this statement now at least twice.

We now know both of these statements to be false. Why? Because Margaret Biggs, CIDA's president, and Naresh Singh, the vice-president for CIDA, said so on December 9 at the foreign affairs and international development committee meeting. They testified that they positively endorsed the funding application for KAIROS. In fact, CIDA staff found that the bid met their criteria, received a positive audit report and had an excellent evaluation. Accordingly CIDA staff sent the response for approval to the minister.

The application approval was endorsed by CIDA's president and vice-president, as follows, “that you sign below to indicate you approve a contribution of \$7,098,758 over four years for the above program”.

CIDA wanted to fund KAIROS. After departmental deliberation, the president decided that funding KAIROS was the right thing to do. Therefore, it is clear to me that the department standards were met and that it fit departmental priorities.

This is particularly disappointing when we review an order paper question submitted by the member for London North Centre, which asked:

With regard to KAIROS, which has lost its funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) as of November 30, 2009 due to KAIROS no longer fitting CIDA priorities: (a) what are the CIDA priorities that did not fit well with the priorities of KAIROS; (b) what sort of criteria does CIDA examine to determine whether or not a non-governmental organization will receive funding...

In response, the minister offered the following:

Mr. Speaker, with regard to a) The CIDA decision not to continue funding KAIROS was based on the overall assessment of the proposal, not on any single criterion.

The operative words are “the CIDA decision not to continue funding KAIROS”. CIDA's decision was to continue funding KAIROS, not to discontinue its funding.

The minister is clearly continuing with her subterfuge. The minister's statement is in complete contradiction to CIDA's position that it met the funding criteria. For the minister to state otherwise is misleading.

● (1545)

The response to question (b) is as follows: “Non-government organizations' proposals to CIDA are assessed on a variety of criteria, which are described on CIDA's website”.

Further, any distinction the minister may try to create or imply between CIDA's criteria and the government's criteria, if she attempts to make such a distinction, are irrelevant. To find otherwise would bring into disrepute all government websites because people will no longer be able to rely upon government websites as reflecting the priorities of the government. The fact that the minister may have used the words “government standards” or “government priorities” in the House, as opposed to CIDA priorities, is therefore irrelevant

because CIDA priorities represent the government's priorities and its criteria are the government's criteria.

Did the minister at the time know that her statement was incorrect?

On December 9, 2010, at the foreign affairs and international development committee meeting, Ms. Biggs made clear that the minister was aware of her department's position. She said, “My discussions with the minister were quite clear. She did, as she indicated, deliberate on it. She knew what my advice was. I don't know where that “not” came from, but she wasn't misled in any way”.

This statement by Ms. Biggs must be considered in addition to the fact that KAIROS received a positive audit report and an excellent evaluation and that it was recommended for funding by CIDA's president and vice-president, all of which facts had to have been known to the minister.

Did she intend to mislead the House? Unless a statement is made negligently, with no regard for the facts whatsoever or with no regard to the nature of the question asked whatsoever, or misleading information was given to her by her department before offering an answer, which is clearly not the case here, then one can only conclude that the answer given was intended to mislead the House. The definition of mislead, according to the Oxford Dictionary is to “cause someone to have a wrong idea or impression”.

Anything stated, designed to, or with the intention of misleading the House, knowing it to be false, imports the conclusion that the person making this statement intended it to mislead or had no regard for whether it would mislead or not, which is equally contemptuous.

The remarks by my colleague, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, as well as the information that I have presented to you, Mr. Speaker, make clear that the minister did in fact mislead the House. The statements made by Ms. Biggs in committee make clear that the minister was aware that she was incorrect in making the statements she made, and I therefore submit that the minister intended to mislead the House and its members. The minister said that KAIROS' funding was cut because CIDA did not want to fund it or that it did not meet government priorities and standards.

We know this to be false. We also have demonstrated that the nuance between whether it met government priorities or standards or CIDA priorities is irrelevant as CIDA priorities must be government priorities. How can they be anything less? And if they are, then the government and not Parliament is truly dysfunctional.

We now know the minister's statements to be false. We also know that the minister was aware that it was false while she was offering her justifications to the numerous questions asked of her in question period. As such I strongly believe that this provides sufficient evidence to hold the minister in contempt of the House.

If the minister did not want to fund KAIROS then she should have explained why she did not want to provide funding instead of pinning the decision on the department she runs. I for one would still like an honest answer and I think everyone in the House and in Canada has the right to know why KAIROS was not funded.

*Government Orders*

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I simply want to inform you that the Bloc Québécois supports the initiative of the member for Scarborough—Guildwood. We want to shed light on the funding that was granted or not granted as well as the various statements regarding KAIROS.

With your leave, we will come back to this issue tomorrow with our own observations.

[*English*]

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, I thank all my hon. colleagues for their interventions this day. I also want to thank my colleague, the former parliamentary secretary, for his remarks and his clarification of some of the comments made today.

However, since the minister responsible has been named on several of the interventions and she has had further obligations to deal with today, I would ask that the government be given the opportunity to respond more clearly and more fully to these matters at our earliest opportunity. I ask you on behalf of the government, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I can tell hon. members that I am quite prepared to defer a decision on this and hear arguments on another occasion, so we will move on.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-43, An Act to enact the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Labour Relations Modernization Act and to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand on behalf of the New Democratic Party of Canada to speak in favour of Bill C-43, An Act to enact the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Labour Relations Modernization Act and to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Our party supports this legislation at second reading, because the bill is generally in line with our party's long-stated support for the right of RCMP officers to engage in collective bargaining, if that is their wish as democratically expressed by the membership.

We, of course, support sending the bill to committee where we look forward to studying it in detail and proposing amendments to deal with a number of specific concerns that we have with the current drafting, to which we have every hope that goodwill on all sides of the House will help us effect positive changes.

The background to the bill is quite straightforward. Bill C-43 was introduced in response to a decision of the Ontario Superior Court, referred to as the MacDonnell decision. Justice MacDonnell ruled in

April 2009 that the existing labour relations regime pursuant to the RCMP Act was a violation of the constitutional right of RCMP officers to engage in free collective bargaining, if that is in fact their choice.

Although the government was initially hostile to RCMP unionization and engaged in repeated appeals of judicial findings against the existing system, it appears that the government has come to accept that some form of unionization within the RCMP is not only desirable, but is actually legally required.

Bill C-43 would provide a new labour relations regime for employees of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who are engaged in policing. The proposed legislation is once again the government's response to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice decision I just referred to, and, again, that court held that to deny RCMP police employees the right to engage in collective bargaining, a right that forms part of the right to freedom of association in section 2(d) of the charter, was indeed unconstitutional.

Once that court decision was made in April 2009, there was no longer any mechanism for establishing a collective bargaining framework for RCMP management to police employees. Recognizing that potential vacuum, the court suggested that Parliament consider establishing a legislation framework for collective bargaining. While the court emphasized that a statutory framework was not a precondition to the establishment of an effective process of collective bargaining, such a statutory framework would, in his words, greatly facilitate this outcome.

In light of this recommendation the court suspended the declaration of invalidity of section 96 of the regulations, that is the part of the act that was struck down, for 18 months to allow the government an opportunity to introduce labour relations legislation for RCMP police employees, and I would like to offer my congratulations to the government for complying with that direction of the court.

I want to start back in June 2008, just before the last federal election. At that time the RCMP had been engaged in a long discussion with the government about the long-standing recruitment and retention problems that it had experienced. Also, there are a number, and have been a number, of pressing issues facing the RCMP that I will go over in a few minutes that require not only resolution, but also the important input of the RCMP officers and civilian members to join into the discussion to find a resolution for those issues.

The Conservative government negotiated increases in the summer of 2008 to address those very real recruitment and retention issues identified by the front-line RCMP officers, and in fact RCMP management, and they actually came up with percentage increases that would help to start the process of alleviating those issues.

What happened? The election occurred and intervened in September and October. On October 16, after the election, we found that the Conservative government reneged on its promises. As soon as it was elected in October 2008, the government betrayed its promise on the very percentage increases that it had agreed to for the RCMP just before the election.

*Government Orders*

•(1555)

I was engaged in collective bargaining for 16 years. One of the cornerstones of labour relations in this country is the concept of good faith. It is the concept that, when parties come to a table and make an agreement, they keep that agreement.

The Conservative government did not do that. It broke its promise. It broke its commitment. It broke its word. The government betrayed the officers who came, in the summer of 2008, and shook hands across the table on a modest percentage increase that the government did not see fit to honour. That is simply unacceptable misconduct, and that is one of the prime reasons why workers consider unionization. When the employer comes to the table and proves itself unworthy of good faith negotiations, the workers then pursue a regime where the other side is compelled to sit down at the table and bargain under a statutory framework because it cannot be trusted.

The Conservative government that broke its promise to RCMP officers are the same people who, in the provincial election of 2009, also told the people of British Columbia that they would not bring in an HST. It is the same politicians. British Columbia Liberals are federal Conservatives. They also misled the voters of that province. They are getting into a habit of breaking their promises and telling voters one thing before an election, when they want their vote, and then acting in a different way after the votes are counted. I come from a riding where democracy is highly prized. The people of Vancouver Kingsway do not tolerate any longer politicians who say one thing before an election and act a different way after an election.

The government fought the simple request by officers of the RCMP to have the right to choose or not to choose to collectively bargain. We must remember that RCMP officers have not chosen to join a union yet, and New Democrats are neutral in this regard. However, we will stand up for all workers in this country to have the right to make that choice for themselves and the right of those workers to make those decisions unmolested, unintimidated and of their own free will and accord, as they measure the pros and cons of collective bargaining. That is a choice purely of the workers. In this case, it is purely the choice of RCMP officers and civilian members across this country to determine if they want to collectively bargain or not.

The Conservative government spent millions of taxpayers' dollars fighting that simple proposal. The courts found that the government's position was unconstitutional, that the longstanding prohibition in law that prohibited RCMP members from collective bargaining in this country was a violation of their charter rights.

The Liberal government that went before the present government also participated in that violation of constitutional rights, so we will hear no great words of wisdom or principle from the Liberal Party about this issue either, since those members did nothing as the constitutional rights of RCMP officers of this country were violated, abrogated and abridged for decades.

I might point out that the RCMP is the only police force in this country that has been prohibited from unionizing. It is high time we corrected this problem. I am proud that New Democrats are the only party that has stood up for the rights of RCMP members to unionize from the get-go.

I also want to talk a bit about RCMP officer input. It has been my experience that successful economies bring to the table the ideas of the management and the entrepreneurs, the ideas and the energy of workers who carry out those directions, and also a government framework that provides a healthy environment for business and labour to flourish at the same time. What is really important about the unionization process in this case is that it can provide a vehicle for RCMP officers to bring to the table their important input into the workplace. That voice has been missing up until now.

I want to congratulate a few people. RCMP officer Patrick Mehain has courageously and with absolute selfless commitment dedicated himself to the fight to allow his brothers and sisters in the RCMP to decide to unionize or not. He has done that at great personal cost to his career. He has demonstrated time and time again the bravery that one would expect from an RCMP officer, but bravery that goes above and beyond the call of duty.

I also want to give great plaudits to the Canadian Police Association and particularly its president, Charles Momy. The Canadian Police Association has been steadfast in lending its support to its sisters and brothers in the RCMP in helping them achieve the very same thing that every other police officer in this country has, which is the right to collectively bargain.

•(1600)

I want to talk a bit about some concerns with this bill, because it is not perfect.

First, it limits the choice of bargaining agent. Right in the bill, it says that the officers can choose any union they want, as long as it is a union that has an established collective bargaining relationship in the policing world. In theory, that is an unacceptable abridgement of a worker's right to choose the collective bargaining agent as they wish. However, I leave it to the RCMP officers to determine if they can find an appropriate bargaining agent. I think that actually they can.

Second, the legislation prohibits certain topics from being discussed at the bargaining table. Once again, that is an unacceptable violation, in theory, of the rights of people to come to the table and to be able to put on the table whatever issues in the workplace they wish. In this case, the legislation prohibits the bargaining agent from talking about these issues: pensions, appointments, promotions, layoffs and classifications.

One can understand pensions, because most public sector employees fall under an already established pension scheme, and I can see that. However, there is no principled reason, in law or in practice, why the bargaining agent or the workers should not be able to come to the table and talk about how their work is classified and give their input and suggestions about how that should work in practice. There is no principled reason to state why those workers should not be able to talk about a layoff process or a fair promotion process.

*Government Orders*

These are aspects of collective agreements across this country that unions have been dealing with for decades and decades, so we are going to be looking forward to exploring at committee why the government thinks that the bargaining agent should not be allowed to discuss those cases and have input, just input, into how those important aspects of their work relationship operate in practice. We will be working to try to amend the bill in that regard.

I also want to raise a concern of the civilian members of the RCMP who work very closely with the officers. These are people who provide very critical and important support to the RCMP officers in their day-to-day activities. They do scientific and forensic work. They run the full gamut of the policing work and work intimately with the RCMP officers in the field.

This legislation gives the autocratic ability to the minister of the Treasury Board to determine which bargaining unit they may go into, and that as well is an unacceptable infringement of those people's rights to choose who their bargaining agent is and how they choose to bargain.

There are pressing issues that I mentioned that are facing the RCMP, many issues that have challenged the force. I think I speak on behalf of all Canadians when we say that the RCMP has a long and proud tradition in this country. It has been known as one of the pre-eminent police forces in our country for a long time and it has a storied history, one that is full of its triumphs and also, it is fair to say, some of its tragedies. However, the issues that we face today with the RCMP, as parliamentarians, and that the RCMP force itself has to deal with, include the following.

They have to deal with issues of RCMP oversight and developing a structure that can restore the confidence of the public so we know that, when there are complaints against RCMP officers, there is a fair, transparent and accountable process to deal with those complaints.

We have the issue of the government closing single-member detachments all over this country, particularly in rural areas, and that is certainly not the way New Democrats would like to see this force going. We say we should be beefing up those single-member detachments, because the NDP thinks that a having a single member in a small town provides an unsafe, unacceptable working condition for that officer, but the answer is not to close that detachment and leave that community unpoliced.

The New Democrats have heard from rural politicians who tell us that they may be an hour and a half or two hours away from the nearest policing resource. What happens when there is an emergency, when there is a domestic assault case going on or something more serious such as a murder or a sexual assault occurring? The government likes to talk about how tough on crime it is, but really, it is closing single-member detachments, which is going to leave hundreds of thousands of Canadians farther away from a police officer.

●(1605)

We have issues of member burnout, stress and post-traumatic stress disorder, very real issues facing RCMP officers in the line of duty, who are called upon to do a very difficult job on our behalf. They are often the very first person at the scene of an accident,

sometimes with fatalities. They have to go to domestic situations where there is spousal assault and children involved. They are the people who have to investigate gruesome crimes of a sexual nature sometimes involving children. They are people who we put into the line of duty every day, into the line of assault and danger to their life and limb. Officers deal with that, and we need to support our officers in that regard.

There are issues of officer morale and at present issues of leadership and management styles in the RCMP. There is the issue of taser use. Just the other day, we found out another person died in this country from the use of a taser, and we need to have a serious look at getting meaningful limitations on the use of that weapon because it clearly is not being used appropriately at the present time. We have issues of RCMP accountability, as I talked about, with civilian oversight.

We also have service delivery issues. I recently met with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which told me that the federal Conservative government has downloaded \$500 million of policing responsibilities on to the municipal and rural areas of this country without a dime of compensation. There is a lack of responsiveness to local policing needs. They told me they cannot get the RCMP to do bylaw enforcement because it does not have the time or resources. Once again, the Conservative government likes to use crime as a political issue and likes to talk and say how tough it is, but it has not put the money behind its word. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities said this to me.

I also want to talk briefly about what unions do and why this is important. Over the last 30 years, the middle and working classes in this country have been hit hard, primarily because of Conservative policies, the policies of the Mulroney government that were carried on by the Liberal Party in the 1990s. The neo-Liberal policies talked about cutting government spending and downloading expenses to the provinces, policies that saw a downloading of costs that resulted in public services being eroded over the last 25 years.

Here are the statistics. Canada's richest 1%, 246,000 Canadians whose average income is \$405,000, took almost one-third, 32% of all growth in incomes between 1987 and 2007. That is the period of Liberal and Conservative governments.

Since the 1970s, the richest 1% in this country has seen its share of total income double. The richest 0.1% has seen its share triple. The richest 0.01% has seen its share increase by more than 500%. In 2009, 3.8% of Canadian households controlled \$1.78 trillion of financial wealth or 67% of the total wealth in Canada. This is what has happened under Conservative and Liberal rule in this country. The rich have got richer and the middle class and working class have got poorer.

*Government Orders*

That is why unionization, which has been proved to show that workers will gain more of their fair share of the economic pie in this country, is so important to the RCMP. It is why the New Democrats will continue to stand up for the rights of Canadian workers of all types, including the RCMP, to access collective bargaining if that is their wish, so that they can have a say in their workplace and in bargaining the terms and conditions of their work, including their compensation packages, which will help build better lives for them and their families.

• (1610)

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with what my hon. colleague said about the difficulty and danger of the work of the RCMP and obviously the importance of supporting the RCMP. I am sure he would agree, in light of what he said, that we should also support the RCMP veterans.

He talked about the infringement of the rights of the civilian members who play a very important role in terms of technical support to the force and very often it is support at the front line. Sometimes it is a civilian member who is right there at the stakeout making sure the equipment is working, making sure the recording devices and the cameras and so forth are operating properly. That is an important role.

What I have heard from the civilian members is that they want to maintain their own separate category. They do not want that category to be removed as is proposed by the legislation, and they feel this is a question of retention, in part, that if they are not maintained as a separate group, if they are put into the regular public service, some members will leave and go off to other departments, when it is very important to keep them there supporting the RCMP.

I would like my hon. colleague's comments on that concern.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Speaker, this bill contains a provision that would give Treasury Board the power to deem some civilian members of the RCMP, which is not to be confused with civilian staff who are already excluded and subject to the Public Service Labour Relations Act, to no longer be "RCMP members" but instead to be taken in under the framework of the Public Service Labour Relations Act themselves.

That would violate not only the right of those workers to make the free choice as to whom their bargaining agent should be, but as my hon. colleague just pointed out, it could have a number of unintended consequences. It could create difficulties in how these members work day to day with the RCMP officers. It could also cause people to leave their jobs and seek employment elsewhere if they feel that their working conditions are eroded and they cannot perform their services in the manner in which they have been accustomed to doing.

I have also met with civilian members of the force and have heard first-hand their expressions of this concern. We should tread very carefully on that because policing requires a comprehensive, co-operative framework among everybody who works on the force, the civilian staff, the civilian members, and the members themselves. We will be looking at this closely in committee to ensure that civilian members' rights are respected.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I, too, have a question about the civilian members because I have

had communications from my constituents regarding this situation. They are concerned that they will be losing out here in terms of choice.

More than even the civilian members, we have the issue of the members themselves being restricted in the sense that they are being told that they must pick a bargaining agent who is involved in that particular area of policing and that they cannot choose whomever they want to represent them.

When we send this committee, does the member think there will be sufficient representations on this issue to make these two changes to give the RCMP officers full choice in the matter, as well as to give the civilian members an equally free choice in the matter?

• (1615)

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Speaker, one of the cornerstone principles of a society that is committed to a free collective bargaining regime is to respect the rights of the workers to freely choose their representative. We cannot have a free collective bargaining system if management, in this case the government, is actually directing or, in any way, truncating the rights of the employees to choose who they want to represent them.

The employees cannot compel management. Management would consider it an absolutely unacceptable intrusion into management rights if employees were to tell management who it could or could not have as its bargaining representative. Therefore, it is absolutely unacceptable that the government would try to do that in this case as well.

Having said that, it is up to the RCMP officers themselves to determine if that is a deal breaker. I look forward to consulting with RCMP officers, like Mr. Mehain, and the Canadian Police Association to determine if they think that is something they can live with. We will, of course, respect the choice of the RCMP officers in this regard.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member's speech was lucid and strong on most points, although not on all.

Would the member to comment on the expanded powers extended to the RCMP commissioner and does he have any concerns in that regard? I did not hear anything in his speech on that but perhaps I missed it.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Speaker, the part of my speech that the member for Ajax—Pickering probably did not like was where I talked about the Liberal Party's shameful record over the last 25 years of not doing anything to help the RCMP officers unionize. Of course, if I were him, I would probably not like it if someone pointed out that the Liberal government did not do anything to stand up for the rights of RCMP officers to unionize either.

However, it is a fact and it is part of the historical record. I think all Canadians, all RCMP officers and all trade unions should know that it is easy to talk the talk during elections and pretend to stand up for collective bargaining in this country, but when in government, to not actually do anything about it, tells a tale more loudly than words do.



*Government Orders*

I also would like to mention that the expanded powers as proposed for the RCMP commissioner are problematic and worthy of concern. At the public safety committee, we have been discussing leadership issues. We are very concerned about the management structure and the way that management is being carried out at the RCMP.

The NDP will be looking carefully to ensure there is an appropriate balance and that the RCMP leadership is delivered in a manner that is accountable, done with integrity and done with the furtherance of the best interests of the RCMP at heart at all times.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, having spent some time in the labour movement, I used to hear a saying that the company gets the union it deserves. It is almost like the government is trying to set the stage to take the choice away from RCMP members as to who represents them. What will the government do next? Will it pass a law that says that it will choose the lawyer in a case against it? It is ridiculous. We live in a country where we have the right to organize. The RCMP, if given the right to organize, should be given the choice of who represents its members.

One concern I have after listening to the commentary today is whether an RCMP officer, in meeting with management, would have the right to have union representation of his or her choice present. That is a very fundamental part of protecting an officer from intimidation or even the suggestion of it. I was wondering if the member could comment.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Speaker, I give full credit to my hon. colleague who gives so much of his career to the trade union movement and to improving the lives of workers across Ontario and this country.

The short answer to the question is that there is nothing in the legislation that would preclude the parties from negotiating representational rights and responsibilities in the collective agreement, which is a positive thing.

One reason my party is supporting this bill going to committee is that it would bring in a legislative framework as the potential to get collective bargaining under way, where RCMP officers can choose a bargaining representative and table a comprehensive set of terms and conditions for a collective agreement, other than the issues that I mentioned we have concerns about. This legislation would prohibit the parties from talking about layoff, promotion, appointment and other things that are standard fare in collective agreements. That is something we will be looking at.

However, to answer the member's question directly, there is nothing in this legislation that would prevent the bargaining agent from tabling terms and conditions that relate to ensuring an RCMP officer has union representation whenever he or she wishes. I leave that to the parties to negotiate at the bargaining table.

• (1620)

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this bill. It is an opportunity to reflect on the incredible work that the men and women in the RCMP do. If there is anything this House can agree on, it is the work that front-line officers do in keeping our communities safe and putting their lives on the line.

I had the opportunity, as the public safety and national security critic for the Liberal Party, to visit attachments across the country and talk with officers. I am always amazed by the work they do and the quality people we have been able to attract to the force.

In that regard, I am pleased to stand and speak to the bill and the portions that are supportable. I will also talk about some areas of weakness that need to be examined in committee.

First, it is important to look at the origins of where this bill came from. The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway, who spoke earlier, talked about the fact that it has been a long time that the RCMP has not unionized. However, what the member left out is that it was not an issue until 2008.

I remember in 2008 when the Prime Minister made a commitment to RCMP officers that they would be given simple parity with other forces, that they would be paid the same for the same job essentially. This was brought forward because there was a real problem with retention and recruitment. The feeling was that they had to be paid the same as other forces that were out there. The Prime Minister gave his word in 2008, shook hands with those RCMP officers who were there and made a speech about how important it was to achieve parity.

Mere months later, that promise was broken. The commitment was tossed out the door and the words soon forgotten. The RCMP were left shocked, bewildered and feeling betrayed. As a result, many felt that the time had come to ask for the right to unionize.

Collective bargaining is a right enjoyed by every other police force in the country. One would assume that when the RCMP members asked for the opportunity to put this to a vote and allow them to decide that the government would have said, of course, as that was their democratic right. However, the government did no such thing. It stood in their way and the matter had to be taken to court.

In April 2009, before the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, it found that section 96 of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police regulations breached the freedom of association in accordance with the RCMP under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom. It concluded that the 20,000-plus members of the RCMP did in fact have a right, as did every other police force, to make a decision on whether they wanted collective bargaining and who they wanted as their bargaining agent.

It is not as if this was given freely by the government. The RCMP had to fight for it after the betrayal in 2008.

However, it is not as if the government then pounced upon the finding of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. In fact, we had to wait from that point until June 17, 2010. It was more than a year later before the government then tabled this bill. This bill was tabled in June and yet we are only just now beginning the process of debating it at second reading.

*Government Orders*

Committees are going on right now and, in fact, I am taking a brief break to speak here before I head back. However, in committee we will be talking about whether we should immediately go to clause by clause on a pardon bill. We have already dealt with half of the bill, which was Bill C-23A, and we will be dealing with Bill C-23B, but the government is attacking us for not passing this bill immediately.

However, if we look at the state of that bill, it is already on the verge of going to clause by clause. The government itself has admitted that the bill is flawed and needs amendments, which we still have not seen, and yet the government is saying that we are holding it up.

Here is a bill that is in front of us that essentially nothing has happened with since June. In fact, nothing really has happened since the court decision in April 2009 and yet government members feel free to stand and attack myself and other members, who are diligently trying to do work at committee, saying that we are not moving those bills fast enough. Obviously this has not been a high priority for the government and, as a result, this matter continues to stick and linger.

I will talk about some of the things that the bill does initiate and some of the things that we support. I also will quickly go through some of the items that are weaknesses in the bill.

●(1625)

If implemented, Bill C-43 would give RCMP members the right of choice whether they want to continue to work in a non-unionized environment or to pursue a unionized option where they would be represented by a certified bargaining agent. Under a unionized scenario, RCMP members would not be able to withdraw their services.

It would further give the RCMP commissioner new powers to appoint, promote, discipline, demote or terminate the employment of all members, including commissioned officers.

On that point, the committee will need to look in more detail at what exactly is the scope of these new powers and how they would be applied. That is an area of some concern. On the first point, just simply giving the choice to members to unionize or not is something that should be taken as a given and something that RCMP members should not have had to fight for over the last number of years.

It would further establish a total compensation advisory committee to provide recommendations to the President of the Treasury Board with recommendations on overall compensation of RCMP members who are not represented by a certified bargaining agent. Under a unionized scenario, this would include RCMP officers, executives and other non-represented or excluded employees of the RCMP.

Further, it would establish a consultation committee to address workplace issues. Through a series of local, divisional, regional and national consultative committees and working groups, members would be given the opportunity to bring their views and concerns directly to managers, either individually or as a group.

It would maintain the existing informal conflict management system whereby options will continue to be offered to resolve

conflicts above and beyond the formal grievance process, such as mediation through a third party. The use of these options would be voluntary, confidential and impartial.

It would provide the commissioner the authority to implement a restructured discipline system that would seek to resolve conduct issues transparently, consistently and promptly. RCMP members would have the right to refer certain decisions or actions of management to the Public Service Labour Relations Board, an impartial and external decision-making body.

And it would establish the Public Service Labour Relations Board as an independent, external third party to make final and binding decisions relating to discipline issues and some grievances of RCMP members.

There are many items that have been called for over a long period of time, certainly that Liberals have been pushing for, that are commendable and laudable and can be supported. One of the areas that is concerning and will have to be looked at in committee is provisions in the bill that would limit who the bargaining agent might be. I am not sure what the reason is for those limitations and why they would be put into force, but it is certainly something that would have to be explained and at the moment seems contrary to the spirit of the decision that was made by the Ontario Superior Court.

On the fact that it would limit certain matters to be discussed, I am concerned about limiting the ability to discuss classification of work, how layoffs might happen, and matters dealing with promotions. These are normally things that would be included in the collective bargaining process. It seems unusual that they would be cut out. It would certainly not be in the tradition of other collective bargaining processes enjoyed by other police forces. So that is going to have to be described and given some consideration.

As for the provision for the Treasury Board president to be able to decide who the bargaining agent is for civilian members, there has been no good explanation provided for that and obviously has a number of civilian members scratching their heads and being concerned as to why the government would put that provision in and why that power would be granted to the Treasury Board president. That will need to be looked at in committee.

Further, I am also concerned about the additional powers given to the commissioner. These powers need to be explained more fully. The powers are particularly concerning in the context of things that we have been hearing about within RCMP, about the head of the organization, about the structure at the top of the organization not being in shape relative to the rest of the organization.

In that regard, because it really reflects on the overall issue of morale, recruitment and retention, we have to talk about some of the other things happening within the force. I am going to start with those that have a direct impact on this notion of extending additional powers to the RCMP commissioner.

*Government Orders*

Let us start with the commission of inquiry conducted by Justice O'Connor. Justice O'Connor found that the oversight mechanisms provided to the RCMP were wholly inadequate. To give an example, the RCMP public complaints commissioner was not empowered to proactively initiate an investigation when something went wrong. He did not have the power to force information from individuals and it could only be provided to him voluntarily.

• (1630)

Also, as many of the operations conducted by the RCMP, particularly those dealing with intelligence and security operations, deal with more than one agency, there is no power to follow the bouncing ball. If something happens within the RCMP, there is no power to see what happened at immigration or what happened at the Canada Border Services Agency, so everything exists in a silo.

The notion of giving the RCMP commissioner additional powers in the absence of having adequate oversight, I think, is deeply troubling. If Justice O'Connor's report was new, the government could be forgiven for not implementing it. However, we are coming up to nearly the five-year mark of Justice O'Connor's report being tabled. The government said it agreed with the conclusions of Justice O'Connor, agreed that those had to be implemented immediately, yet those recommendations still sit collecting dust, with no action taken.

This is particularly concerning given the fact that we saw what happened with Mr. Arar and the terrible ordeal he went through in a Syrian prison.

It was repeated with Mr. Almalki, Mr. Abou-Elmaati and Mr. Nureddin, in the report done by Justice Iacobucci where he repeated the call, the need for these reforms to take place and to have that oversight.

For I and other members to sit in a room where we had a replica of the cell that these gentlemen were confined to, as they told their stories of listening and waiting as footsteps went by, wondering when they were going to be pulled from their cell and tortured next, and knowing that detention and torture had at its heart many failures within the Canadian intelligence system, we would think the government would be urgently trying to remedy that so that these horrific circumstances and the torture that these men went through would not be repeated. Yet here again we have a bill giving the commissioner new powers, with no oversight.

I would remind this House that Paul Kennedy, who was the RCMP public complaints commissioner, also talked about the urgent need of reform within his office. He spoke about the import of some of these changes and oversight. Of course, like anyone who criticized the government, he was fired, ostensibly his contract was not renewed, because of the fact that he was being critical, because he was showing what needed to change, what needed to be done. The government got rid of him, which is a terrible tragedy. This is somebody who did tremendous work.

Who replaced Mr. Kennedy? Essentially, it was a wills and estate lawyer who had made all kinds of contributions to the Conservative Party, who we have never heard from since and I do not suspect we ever will.

It is hard to think of a week that went by where we did not hear from Mr. Kennedy, stepping forward and speaking out on behalf of

the changes that needed to happen within the RCMP. Yet, of the new commissioner, we hear essentially nothing, which given his background and connections to the Conservative Party is probably exactly what the government was hoping for.

However, when these voices are killed, these independent voices that shine light into dark corners, that give us an opportunity to know what the truth is and what is going on, the whole process is undermined. Frankly, it is offensive that the government would come and ask to give even more powers to the commissioner in absence of moving forward at all with any of these oversight mechanisms.

It is also important for us to reflect upon the work that was done in the Brown report, in the wake of the RCMP pension scam, where he said there had to be important structural changes happen to the RCMP as an organization. Mr. Brown gave the government two years. He thought it was an aggressive but achievable timeline in which to make those changes. The government did nothing. It did not recommend a single one of Mr. Brown's changes. Despite the fact that it said, yes, it agreed with what he said needed to be done, it did not implement those changes. In fact, some six months ago we celebrated the two-year mark he had given for the changes to be implemented.

So it is not surprising, when we look at this, why we are having some problems within the RCMP in terms of morale. Those brave men and women who are on the front lines doing their job are looking and asking why these changes are not taking place; why is reform not happening at the top of the organization; why is the government consistently ignoring commission after commission, inquiry after inquiry?

• (1635)

The public safety committee has issued many recommendations on this, and it too is ignored. The government's response is, "Yes, we are going to do it", and then it does not.

We also know that Mr. Kennedy spoke very clearly about the need to take action with respect to conducted energy weapons. The report that he did on the death of Mr. Dziekanski and the lessons that came from there still largely has not been implemented. Most of the recommendations, some of them very simple around providing direct guidelines and direction for use of conducted energy weapons, still sit not implemented.

As an example, in the case of Mr. Dziekanski, who was fired upon multiple times, the second and third time even after he was already subdued and riling on the ground in pain, one simple recommendation would simply be that once somebody is incapacitated, to stop shooting them. It would seem a fairly straightforward thing to be able to implement, yet even that is not there.

We also know with respect to conducted energy weapons that it really needs to be placed into that continuum of force training that happens at depot, yet at depot that does not happen. Right now when they are getting their continuum of force training, conducted energy weapons are not part of the training. They have guns, a stick, and pepper spray, but left out of that continuum is the taser and the question of where exactly in application of force it should be put.

*Government Orders*

When we reflect upon all of this overwhelming desire for change, all of the self-evident changes that need to happen and the fact that the government continually does not do it, I am completely baffled as to why.

I get asked by many members, if all of these things are so self-evident, if these reports have been done with clear and concise recommendations and timelines and it is made clear how the implementation should happen, why has it not been done?

The latest excuse, when we get an excuse, was that they were waiting for Justice Major's report on Air India. After Justice Major tabled his report some seven or eight months ago, there was a lot of hope that we would finally get movement on all of these things that have been outstanding forever.

Yet last week the government tabled its so-called action plan on Air India and absent from the action plan was any action. Instead of actually moving on all these things that have been standing and waiting to move forever, there were some vague, general aspirational statements that we would have expected the day after Justice Major's report came out. There is still no movement whatsoever on oversight.

In the case of Justice Major's report, where there were a number of new things that were talked about, including somebody who could head up counterterrorism to break through those different silos there, the victims of Air India had to wait all that period of time only to be told that after the government had said six months ago that it would accept the recommendation, it is now tossing it out. Too bad.

When it came to compensation for those families, too bad. Wait and maybe one day they will hear from the government.

If Justice O'Connor's report is any example at all, it has been five years and we are still waiting. I wonder if the Air India families are going to be asking the same kind of questions that Mr. Arar's family is asking five years later, or Mr. Abou-Emaati's or Mr. Almalki's or Mr. Nureddin's.

I will conclude with this. I think it is important that we empower the RCMP to make the choice of whether or not it wants to unionize.

The bill needs to proceed to committee. There are a number of areas that are weak. However, I would call upon the government, for the sake of the RCMP, this national symbol that is in desperate need of renewal, with Canadians really calling out and begging for the government to make the changes that do service to the organization, that it act on what has been asked of it and move on what needs to be done, not just on this but on all outstanding matters.

• (1640)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, certainly the RCMP has a storied history, but in the last few years it has been mired in many scandals that really should not have happened.

I was very interested in the member's comments regarding the expanded powers of the commissioner. I think that is where a lot of the problem lies and I think the member is onto something there.

I hope at committee the member will pay special attention to that and try to at least limit or more clearly define the powers of the

commissioner, because we certainly do not want to expand those to any great degree.

Has the member any further opinions about that particular aspect of his speech?

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, we have to be careful because often just empowering one person with vague, general powers is a lazy way of trying to get at a problem. Instead of creating a mechanism that has built within it accountability, we throw a whole bunch of powers to one person and hope he or she uses them judiciously. That is a dangerous approach at the best of times, but in the absence of oversight, it is downright reckless.

We know right now that there are serious questions within the RCMP about how things are working at the most senior level, about how criticism is being taken and how judiciously power is being used. Therefore, I have grave concerns about bestowing additional powers onto one person and one office.

As an adjunct to this, something I did not mention in my speech, which is something for which the RCMP has been calling for a long time and which has been sitting around this place for the last five years, was lawful access. If we are to give police officers new powers, and we very much support that so they can go after terrorist networks, child predators or whomever it might be online and get at them as they move and operate technologically, we cannot move on those new powers unless we correspondingly have oversight. The two must move in tandem. Therefore, it is concerning in the bill, yet again, to see new powers bestowed with no new oversight.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see someone doing speeches without constantly looking at notes and talking points. There is not enough of that going on these days.

I do want to compliment the member on several aspects, one of which raised concerns for me, and that is the oversight aspect. Quoting from the bill, it states:

It authorizes the Commissioner to make rules relating to human resource management processes and for the training, conduct, performance of duties and discipline of members and for the organization, efficiency, administration or good government of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

It seems to be a highly powerful place in which to be. Could he comment on the oversight issue regarding that? At first glance, I thought this was perhaps a bit overly prescriptive.

There is another issue I want to bring up. One of the issues for me, living in rural Canada, specifically rural Newfoundland and Labrador, and my colleague from the NDP touched on this as well, is the downloading of services to local areas. When it comes to single-member detachments, that is certainly a concern in my area. I personally would like to see single-member detachments beefed up, to have more members involved, but it seems like they will be shut down in many places. Could he comment on that as well?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising the issue of single-member detachments and the fact that the government is moving to close many down in small and rural communities, which has a devastating impact on public safety to be quite frank. These detachments play an extremely critical role in responding quickly and providing safety and security. It would be very devastating for families in domestic violence situations, for example. When these are shut down, it has a big impact in a very negative way on communities.

I know the member has been very active on this and has spoken out about the need to preserve these. I certainly support his efforts in that regard. I appreciate anything I can do to work with him on that to stop the government's actions in that regard.

Regarding oversight, the government, with its solution to everything, whether it is refugees or the RCMP, has to stop tossing enormous amounts of power to one individual and then giving no corresponding oversight. I have spoken a great deal about this, but it is a concern that this is a trend of which we see more and more.

• (1645)

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, the government is very prescriptive in the way it is handling two areas, the civilian members, and I have certainly heard from some of them on that issue, and the basic bargaining group of the officers themselves.

The bill indicates that the bargaining agent has to be represented by a recognized union, a common union from other police forces. The way to go with this would be to allow the workers to come up with their own choices as to who they want to represent them.

The same aspect is involved with the civilian members. The civilian members who are contacting me are very concerned that they are going to be told by Treasury Board what they are going to do. They want to make up their own minds and make their own decisions as to how we should proceed through this.

Once again, the government was forced this far by the court decision to take the choices it had made already to bring in the legislation against its will. Now it is trying to stage-manage the process further.

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, a committee was absolutely going to look at this. I can discern no good reason why this choice would be deprived of members.

As I said in my speech, if we look at forces across the country, this is given to any other police force I can think of or have looked at. Therefore, why the RCMP would be treated differently is disquieting. However, it is part of a trend, where our national police force is asked to be treated differently, lesser than other police forces, lesser in terms of pay, ability to collectively bargain and organize on behalf of their members. Why the double standard? Why is the government so tough on police officers? Why is it so hard on RCMP members? That is a question a lot of members within the RCMP are asking a lot of members of the public.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, one of the issues the hon. member talked about was limited choice when it comes to the bargaining unit. I believe I heard this earlier, and I was not aware of it, that it was limited to the policing world when it came to the bargaining unit itself. Could the hon. member comment on that and briefly talk

about what this does? I know it is a broad issue and I apologize to my colleague. However, could he comment on the current morale of the RCMP? He has worked over the last three years quite extensively on these issues.

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, the short answer on morale is I have a lot of concerns. RCMP members in the rank and file, the front line officers, are rightfully proud of the work they do. They are rightfully proud of the service they provide to their communities and the fact that they are willing to put their lives on the line to keep us safe and do a tough job.

The things I have mentioned, this issue and the way it has been dealt with, issues around wage parity and around all the changes and reforms that need to happen. Seeing all the mistakes happening that are beyond their control and seeing the government not acting on them is wearing tough on those members. It is having an impact on recruitment and retention. There is a real need to act, not just here, but in those other areas to ensure we keep that force strong, not only in terms of its members and bringing in new folks, but also in terms of how it is perceived outside.

• (1650)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-43. We would not be dealing with the bill in the House today had it not been for an Ontario court decision last year. The government has fought this issue for quite some time.

We are talking about giving RCMP members the ability to form a union of their choice if they wish. This issue has been discussed for quite a number of years and governments, whether Liberal or Conservative, have made no effort to be helpful and allow this to happen.

Members of the organization spent a considerable amount of money and time to take this issue to court. When they won the court decision, the government quickly introduced legislation, which appears to take away some of the rights the members wanted by going to court in the first place.

RCMP members want to select their own bargaining agent. This legislation dictates that only a bargaining agent which primarily represents workers in the field of policing is eligible to be certified as a recognized union for RCMP officers. To the average person, this may make a lot of sense, but it is a fundamental restriction on the right of workers to choose who they want as their bargaining agent.

The same issue comes into play with respect to civilian members. The RCMP has now grown to around 24,000 members. The minister indicated today that there were perhaps 3,000 to 4,000 civilian members in the RCMP. They too are being restricted in ways that they perhaps would not have contemplated when the decision to go to court was made. It is left in the hands of Treasury Board to decide their fate.

*Government Orders*

The Conservative government knew for several years that this issue was before a court. It knew there was a possibility that it might lose, and that is what happened. The government lost the decision and because of a court order, it introduced the legislation.

The government could have quickly consulted with members of the RCMP before it brought the legislation to the House. It could have asked civilian members for their opinion as opposed to simply introducing the legislation, saying it could not consult because it was operating on the basis of a court order, that consulting would happen once the bill went to committee.

• (1655)

The NDP has agreed to support this legislation to get it to committee. However, the civilian members who are contacting me will now have to go through the process of making arrangements and representations to the committee.

We all know that the committee process is not like the process in the Manitoba legislature, which I am familiar with, where we let anybody make a presentation. Provided that the presenters know about the bill they are presenting on in the first place and when the committee is meeting, they can come and register at the last minute, show up by the hundreds if they want and they are given their 10 minutes to present and answer questions. That is how it is dealt with.

However, in this case we are talking about a committee that is held here in Ottawa. How are these members supposed to travel in from outside the Ottawa area at their own expense to present before the committee? The way these committees operate in Ottawa is different from the provincial committees. The provincial committees allow anybody to come in, whether people are experts in the area or whether they come in off the street, and give their opinion. It is a totally different environment here.

These members will not be invited to present to the committee unless they are recognized experts. Certainly that was my experience with the air passenger bill of rights and any other legislation in which I was involved. It is a very selective process in Ottawa.

I am not in any way happy with how this is happening because the civilian members who are contacting me are absolutely right. They missed the consultation before the bill was drafted. We can tell them all we want that they will have a chance at committee but we know better than that. We know they will not be invited to the committee because the committee is very restricted. The committee will only sit for a few days and it will want to hear from expert witnesses.

However, that does not mean that the issue will not be aired. The committee will hear from the experts and, hopefully, the civilian members who are contacting me will be happy. However, the civilian members should have been given more opportunity to make a presentation to the committee.

I want to read an email correspondence from Ms. Deneene Curry from Edward Avenue in Transcona in my riding. She is one of the civilian members of the RCMP who will be affected by this legislation. She expresses concerns about the bill, perhaps concerns that could have been dealt with had she had proper consultation in advance of the bill being introduced.

She talked about a section 20(1)(a) that would place the positions of civilian members under threat of conversion to public service positions, and that the Treasury Board, as we have indicated, would ultimately determine the category of an employee within the RCMP. She is concerned that at no point does it seem that the civilian members will be allowed to collectively vote on the issue or decide on their future status.

I thought this was all about giving freedom of choice to members to decide whether they want a union in the first place and, if they do decide to have one, to at least let them freely choose which union it is will be.

However, that is not what is happening here. It appears that is being preordained. In the area of the civilian members, it appears that the Treasury Board would tell them and in the area of the officers themselves, the legislation would tell them who they can have representing them.

• (1700)

I ask the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek to bear me out on this. In any other walk of life, in dealing with representation across the country, if workers in any other province decided to change representation or change unions they can vote and change representatives. However, that does not seem to be an option here. Members are being told that, in much the same way that they have had the company union association dealing with their concerns over the last several decades, now we would tell them who their representatives will be and, if they do not like them, I really do not know how many other options are out there.

We know that the RCMP, which has 24,000 members, is the last police force without union representation and they are ready for it. I believe every police force in the country with over 50 members has union representation. The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek might know that.

Ms. Curry goes on to say that the civilian members are considered subject matter experts in their fields and they are individuals with specialized training and skills sets that are unique to the RCMP and its environment. The civilian members are required to work various hours of the day, often on short notice, to meet investigational demands and court deadlines and they may be transferred or dispatched in the event of an emergency, disaster, special events, such as the Olympics and the G8, or to fulfill resource shortages. She says that this may no longer be the case if the civilian members are forced into the public service realm.

She goes on to say that the civilian members are sworn in members of the RCMP and that they are therefore subject to the same sort of standards, expectations, regulations, security clearance and leave restrictions as regular members. Because of these factors, it is not an easy process to fill vacated civilian member positions with qualified individuals. They chose their civilian member positions over applying for other positions that they may have qualified for in other organizations. They are proud members of the RCMP and they devote their skill sets to the organization. If they are converted to public servants, there is a risk that many of these civilian members would seek employment opportunities outside of the RCMP, which would create a loss of valuable resources and put ongoing criminal investigations at a serious disadvantage.

*Government Orders*

She is certainly concerned, and I think rightly so, but perhaps if the government had made an effort to consult with people like her before it introduced the bill, she and others would not be writing emails to me in this situation. I am sure I am not the only member of Parliament who is getting representation on this issue. We will certainly be in touch with her to let her know that the committee will be meeting and that she should phone the appropriate secretary of the committee as soon as possible to try to get on the list.

I wanted to talk about the history of the RCMP and I found some very interesting historical facts. To make the argument that while it started small and has a very valuable role in our country, it has grown to 24,000 members. As with any organization, as it grows in size and develops there are different types of problems that are to be found in an organization of 24,000 people with the role and mandate of the RCMP.

The RCMP has international involvement as well. It has been deployed on UN missions in Namibia, the former Yugoslavia, Haiti, South Africa, Rwanda, Bosnia, Sierra Leone, Guatemala, Western Sahara, the Netherlands, Croatia, Kosovo and East Timor, and the role of the RCMP on these UN missions was not to act as official peacekeepers but rather to act as a temporary civilian police force.

• (1705)

The RCMP has a huge role, and I could get into all the other roles that it has, but it is the police force where there is no local force.

The organization has had a storied past and has been well respected over the decades in this country. However, in the last six years there have been numerous problems that point to an extreme level of difficulty within that organization. We heard about the stress on the job, the morale in the RCMP and the taser issues. At a certain point, the public started to ask questions. Maybe the first one or two problems within the force were simply greeted by the public as something that one should expect given the size and complexity of the organization, but there have been so many lately that I think the public have come to the conclusion that it is time to make some changes, and certainly this is a change.

Perhaps the government does not see this as a positive change and dreads the idea of having a unionized police force. However, in today's environment, with a force of 24,000 people and the complexity and variety of problems they must deal with, having a union involved, the type of union environment that they choose on their own, might be very helpful in improving morale in the force and, I hope, would have something to do with reducing the stress levels in the force.

The big problem right now within the force is that there does not seem to be any real avenue for people to express their opinion. Over the years that the company union was in place in the RCMP, there was much concern on the part of the officers to voice concerns in the workplace for fear they may not get a promotion, or they may not be seen as team players, or they may have some sort of retribution from their superiors.

In forming their own union, one would hope that this would help to alleviate some of these problems. However, at the end of the day we are not 100% sure whether they would proceed with a union. There is a lot of scare-mongering going on out there.

I am not sure of my time, but I know it is never enough.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** It is for us.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** I thank the hon. member. It is only a couple more days before the probable election I would think. I guess we all hope to be back here.

The bill will be going to committee and we in the NDP do have several concerns that we will attempt to deal with by amendment. I did discuss one of them, which is the dictate of which bargaining agent the RCMP would have to deal with.

A second amendment to the bill that we would be looking at is in the area of the limitations on the topics that might be negotiated at the bargaining table, including some substantial components of a contract, such as pensions. That would something we would be interested in dealing with in committee.

I also indicated our concern with the civilian members' issues. We could deal with that in committee as well.

• (1710)

I regret that I will not be able to get into the very interesting history of the RCMP and its early trips out west to deal with particular issues at Fort Whoop-Up.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that through the course of this debate, I am understanding the concept that there needs to be a formal process for people to vent their anger and frustrations about the workplaces they are in, such as the cases of grievances under a normal function of a union or in a union membership. In this particular case, however, I have a couple of issues with how this is structured.

It appears it would establish a consultation committee to address workplace issues. Through a series of local, divisional, regional and national consultative committees and working groups, members would be given the opportunity to bring their views and concerns directly to managers, either individually or as a group. That sounds all nice and everything else. However, the problem with that is that, from what I understand, it would then go directly to the commissioner as opposed to circumventing him and going directly to the Treasury Board.

To me, it seems it is an exercise in employee morale as opposed to a specific issue that needs to be addressed by any particular individual. I believe the member mentioned in his speech that there is fear of repercussions if employees do that and certainly if they bring it directly to the commissioner. That would be a fear I would certainly have as a member of the force.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that we are somewhat unclear as to what the final product is going to be. I get the impression that we have a very reluctant government that resisted attempts by officers to form a union, to the extent that they had to go to court at great expense. Now that the government has been court ordered to produce legislation, it has drawn up legislation in such a way as to make the final product to its liking.

*Government Orders*

As the member knows, opposition members have a majority on the committee. When the bill gets to committee, amendments will be brought in and hopefully passed to make certain that police officers themselves get the right to choose who their bargaining agent is. It might be one of the police organizations out there right now, or it might not be. And do civilian employees go the same route?

However, at the end of the day what the final structures look like will all depend on what comes out of the committee and how the structures get implemented. The members may decide at the end of the day not to form a union at all. They may decide that some other structure may be in play.

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always interesting to see NDP members stand up for our military or police officers. I know of situations when they stood up, for instance, when we wanted to arm border guards to stop criminals coming in. They suggested, instead of passing out service revolvers, that we pass out flowers at the border. That is one example of the approaches they take with our military, with no disrespect to the member.

First, I want to know clearly how many civilian members he has talked to and what the empirical evidence was that they brought back. Any good survey, as he knows, would have a good 1,000 members. I would like to hear from him how many members he talked to and what they spoke of in particular.

I want to remind the member that if he does not like the way committees are run, as he mentioned, opposition members have a majority on the committee and they can change it if they want. Clearly, he is trying to indicate that the government has control of these committees, which we do not. We are pushed around by opposition members on a constant basis and we have to continue to work with them to try to get through what our people have told us to get through, which is to get tough on crime and to supply our RCMP members.

This government stepped forward with pay to RCMP members and where was he for that? He voted against it. Clearly, he is trying to suck and blow at the same time.

I would like to know how many members he has talked to. I would like to hear some real evidence from him, not just an occasional letter read out.

• (1715)

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, I will attempt to address that rambling, disjointed question in a moment.

The hon. member wants to talk about arming border guards. Just yesterday we had a Liberal member on the Roy Green radio show across Canada talking about how the government has spent \$90,000 to train each border guard on how to use weapons. That did not even account for all the excessive cost involved in hotels. That was just the beginning, \$90,000 per border guard.

The member may not know this, but in the last five or six years since the border guards have been armed, evidently there has been only one occasion when the border guards had to use the guns, which was a moose, I believe. They had to shoot a moose that was sick.

That is the government's idea of getting smart on crime. The Conservatives are the smart guys on crime. This is a government that in 1979 started sending pension cheques to prisoners in federal prisons.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, during the debate pursuant to Standing Order 52 later today, no quorum call, requests for unanimous consent or dilatory motion be received by the Chair.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to move this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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**ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE  
MODERNIZATION ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-43, An Act to enact the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Labour Relations Modernization Act and to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we had a fairly reasonable debate going in this place until the last intervention. One of the things that is important for us to understand as a group is that the right of workers to organize is a charter right.

Here we have the government prescribing endless hoops for these workers to jump through, and police officers very surely are workers. If we look at the hours they put in and the duties they follow, they should have every right equal to any other citizen in this country.

The reality for me is that, looking at the bill and now hearing the member for Elmwood—Transcona talk about the committee, I am pleased to hear there will be some interventions at committee, because this bill has not been thoroughly thought out by the government.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, it is very nice to have an excellent question on the part of a member from our party on this issue. The fact of the matter is that this has not been thoroughly thought out. This has been a rushed job, as a result of a court order, on the part of a very reluctant government, which did not like the decision of the court in the first place and I think is now trying to stage manage the final outcome of the process to make certain that the members do not get, as the member said, their charter rights, their right to pick their own union.



*Government Orders*

Certainly there is the exposure with the civilian members, who obviously have not been thought about too much by the government. It is getting to the end of the session, and all session I have been asking the question as to when the government will tell me why Joe Clark and Don Mazankowski started sending pension cheques out, licking stamps, licking envelopes and sending pension cheques to prisoners in federal institutions in 1979. I want to see the studies. I want to know what studies Don Mazankowski and Joe Clark took part in to justify that decision, because now we have to clean up the mess—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I think we will move on to resuming debate. The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House of Commons to deliver some comments on what is a very important bill.

Many would ultimately argue that the RCMP is one of those iconic things here in Canada. Many individuals aspire to get into that profession, because it is a noteworthy, honourable profession to be in.

I also like the fact that I am following the member for Elmwood—Transcona, someone who I have known for a number of years, since 1988 I guess it would be. We sat on opposition benches for a good 11 years. I see he has not lost his touch. I look forward to having some exchanges with the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

It is very important to recognize the need for labour relations and the important role that they play in the economy and our social fabric and how important it is that we move forward in trying to do what is right as legislators.

I know in the past we tried to provide comment on what is good legislation and make the suggestion that it at least be allowed to move forward, although we want to stop some legislation in its tracks. My understanding and quick reading of this particular bill is that there is merit for it to go to committee. We look forward to seeing it go to committee.

As has been pointed out, once the bill is in committee, opposing parties can work together to enhance the legislation and possibly make it better for our RCMP. That is a positive thing. I look forward to being able to see what type of amendments might arise from the committee stage.

On this issue of RCMP and law and order, I listened to the question from one of the members opposite to the member for Elmwood—Transcona. He talked about the government being tough on crime. When he said that, right away I kicked back into the byelection. In the byelection, that was a major issue. Crime and safety is something I hope to be able to talk about a lot as the days go on here in Ottawa and we are in session.

The RCMP has played a critical role, not only while on duty but also when off-duty, I will suggest. I would like to give an example of the type of dedication our RCMP officers bring to the table.

We see them in uniform. We see them in terms of what they do, particularly in Manitoba, in our rural communities, but also in our urban centres. Maybe what we do not see as much are the things the RCMP officers do during their off-duty hours. I have had the

privilege of working with RCMP officers in their off-duty hours. I have had many opportunities to have discussions in terms of the types of contributions they make.

Ultimately I would argue that this is one of the reasons why it is when we debate legislation of this nature that we do need to give it time and to allow for it to go to committee. My understanding is, and I am not 100% up on all the rules of this chamber obviously, that it will go to committee where we will hear presentations and hopefully see some amendments brought forward.

Why I believe it is important, in good part, is that we need to return what we can to those officers who serve and serve us so well. One of the things I want to highlight is the off-duty responsibilities that many members, if not all, take.

I have had the opportunity to be involved with a youth justice committee. These youth justice committees have proven to be fairly successful if they are managed well. Provinces will in fact take advantage of them and incorporate them into the system.

On our committee we had a wonderful RCMP officer who has just recently retired. In the sense of commitment to volunteerism, this officer was fairly impressive.

• (1720)

I would encourage individuals as they start to think about how they want to see this bill develop going into committee to reflect on some of the volunteer efforts that our RCMP officers put in. I offer this as one example of the type of volunteerism that they provide.

In this particular case it was Al Pasquini, a retired individual who made himself available first in the community of Thompson, I believe, in northern Manitoba. He dealt with young offenders and tried to come up with alternative ways in which dispositions could be held for where they had committed a crime. He really put a face on the whole process of justice.

After years of serving with the RCMP in northern Manitoba he was relocated to the city of Winnipeg. Once he arrived in Winnipeg it was only a matter of weeks before he made contact with me and a couple of others and indicated that he wanted to continue doing volunteer work with young offenders. We were most happy to have him primarily because he was not only a great volunteer but he brought his expertise to the committee. He knew how to deal with young offenders first-hand and he understood why some of the crimes took place. He had the ability to communicate and follow through on the issues that were important in terms of dispositions for justice committees. He had so much to offer.

All RCMP officers have phenomenal skill sets that are underestimated in terms of their importance and the role that they play. That is the reason why I would suggest that when we look at this legislation it is defined in the sense of when an RCMP officer is on duty, but that is only a part of it.

*Government Orders*

For many RCMP officers volunteering is a way of life. I see Al Pasquini as one of those individuals who has dedicated his life to being an RCMP officer. To say that he worked 60 hours a week would probably underestimate the actual number of hours that Mr. Pasquini worked. Knowing other individuals within the RCMP I would say that Mr. Pasquini was not alone. This is the type of dedication RCMP officers bring to the table and at the end of the day this dedication is of great value to all of us. I was the chair of one of the committees on which Mr. Pasquini sat. We benefited because of his expertise and his willingness to volunteer.

There is also the issue of what RCMP officers do during the work week, during their shifts. They put themselves in potential danger seven days a week, 24 hours a day, in order to ensure that we can feel safe in the environments in which we live. I suspect that the House would unanimously agree with me about the dedication shown by our RCMP officers with respect to the type of work they do and the benefits our communities receive as a result.

I have had the opportunity to quickly go through Bill C-43 and I feel it is a bill of great value. We should be looking for ways to improve labour relations between RCMP staff and management. I understand that the government did not volunteer to bring in this legislation. It was forced to bring in this legislation because of a court ruling and somewhat grudgingly brought this bill forward. For whatever reasons the bill is before us today. I do believe that the government has the responsibility to approach it with an open mind once it gets to committee.

● (1725)

I know from the Manitoba legislature that we often got presentations dealing with legislation that we had brought through, and I anticipate that there will be presentations that will be coming to committee for this bill. I look forward to hearing those presentations, or at least participating in that process, because it is an interesting profession. I have always admired the red coats and the roles that they have played. I made reference at the beginning of my comments to what an important symbol the RCMP is for Canadian society.

I have not had, I admit, the discussions with the RCMP officers or the rank and file as to what they feel about the legislation. I have a feeling that we will have some time, maybe not very much time, to be able to do that, and I look forward to having that dialogue. Knowing that this bill could in fact be passing at any point in time, I thought it would be nice just to be able to get up and comment on that today, but also to take the opportunity to emphasize something that has come out of the federal byelection, and that is the whole issue of crime and safety.

Crime and safety was in fact the number one issue in Winnipeg North, and I would suggest it even goes beyond Winnipeg North. Our RCMP do play a critical role in that and we need to look at ways in which we can improve and support our forces, whether it is the RCMP or the local police forces, because it does make a difference.

I suspect that establishing a new labour relations regime would go a long way in terms of just being able to ensure that there is a higher morale among the rank and file officers. That is something in which all sides can win. We do not have to be fearful of unions and organized labour. Organized labour does play a very important role in our society and I suspect that affording the opportunity for the

RCMP to make that determination among themselves is something that they will take very seriously, and at the end of the day, I suspect that if we provide them the opportunity it will only be a question of time before it is acted upon.

There needs to be some consideration given in terms of the whole issue of strikes and what would happen in strike situations. There are all sorts of issues related to arbitration. Labour relations can get complicated at the best of times in terms of trying to come up with the compromises and consensus that are necessary. Ultimately, the rank and file might feel better knowing that they have a labour group that has that vested interest to protect the rank and file's interests. That is why, as we are looking at Bill C-43 today, I do not see any reason why the bill should not be going to the committee. By allowing it to go to committee, hopefully we will be able to hear from other members as to what they feel might be amendments that would enhance the bill.

I have had some experience in minority governments from 1988 to 1990, and what I have found is that minority governments can work if in fact the government is willing to look at good ideas and is prepared to compromise.

● (1730)

So I would look to the government benches and appeal to the government to look at ideas that might come from whatever political entity within this chamber and, ultimately, adopt good ideas.

I suspect, I hope and I trust that at the end of the day ideas that might come from the official opposition would in fact be considered and we would be able to garner the support in order to see it passed.

Obviously, if we all believe in the value of our RCMP, I do not understand why it is that we would be reluctant about trying to make this legislation even that much better, that much stronger, because the better we make the legislation, the more effective it would be. And at the end of the day, how would we lose if we have more value in legislation such as this so that our RCMP are feeling that much better and confident in terms of the House of Commons providing the type of support that they need?

I believe, in good part, many members of the RCMP rank and file want to see legislation of this nature. I suspect it has been a long time in coming. Now that we have it here today, it is only a question of how it is that we might possibly modify it. However, at the very least, I see no harm in having the bill go to committee so that we can ultimately see what could be done to maybe even make it even a bit better legislation so that, at the end of the day, the biggest winners here would be our citizens, followed by the RCMP rank and file. This is something that I believe is important to all of us, that we want to have as much harmony as possible within the police ranks. We know that at times the current government's record, in terms of providing harmony, has been lacking as it has, in essence, created controversy. However, I will leave that possibly for another time.

*Government Orders*

I am thankful for the opportunity to say a few words on the bill. I do look forward to being able to provide comments on other justice-related legislation as we get closer to the issue of the tough on crime type of bills. Members will find that I am very opinionated because at the end of the day what I have seen is a lot of talk about tough on crime, but I can say that in the last five years it has not gotten any better, in terms of crime and safety in many areas of Canada, in particular, in Winnipeg North. I think people want to see action as opposed to words. It is more than just legislation. It is about engaging people. It is about looking at the laws that we currently have. It is about providing programming. There is so much that can be done on that particular front, but I will save that speech for another time.

• (1735)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for his first speech in the Parliament of Canada. As he has indicated, I have known him now for a while. I was elected in 1986 and he was right behind, in 1988. He certainly fulfilled a very difficult role over the years in the Manitoba legislature, at one time or another, being the only member in the entire House from his party or maybe one of two. He certainly knows how to survive in a jungle, and this is just a bigger jungle than the one he has just come from. However, I do wish him well here.

I want to ask him about the civilian members. I have had representations from various civilian members of the RCMP about this bill, indicating that they have not been consulted, that it is not well thought out, and that the whole process is not very helpful to them. I would assume that the member has been getting the same sort of representations from his office. So I would just like to ask him to expand on that aspect, or any other aspect that he wants to, regarding this bill.

However, my main purpose was to congratulate him on his first speech in the House and I really wanted to be the first person to ask him a question.

• (1740)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, first, when ministers bring in legislation, they have a responsibility to go out and consult with all the stakeholders. We in opposition like to think they do their homework, that they do the consultation. Much like when I addressed the issue in my comments on the bill, I indicated that I did not really get the chance to talk to some RCMP officers in regard to it, and it is only because of timing, but I will talk to them.

Most important, I believe we all have a role, but especially the minister who brings in the legislation. I am not naive to believe that every minister does his or her job. I have witnessed many provincial ministers who failed to do proper and adequate consultation prior to bringing in legislation.

I would hope and trust that the government has done the consultation. Whether it is with civilians who work within the RCMP, or the volunteers who work in the RCMP, or the RCMP rank and file or the lay Canadian, there is a wide spectrum of stakeholders. If the minister has not done that consultation, chances are will find that out during the committee stage and it will amplify

mistakes and ultimately provide a forum for members to be critical of government.

If I were to find out no consultation was done, I would be a little upset, as many people would be.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would also like to welcome the new member and congratulate him on winning the election.

I would like to hear more from him about minority government. When he was talking about how it should work it was music to my ears. However, there must be a little naïveté about the whole thing, and I still retain mine. I have noticed that it is extremely hard to function properly with the way things are now. That said, I understand that he is brand new.

At the first opportunity, would he be prepared to defeat the current government to ensure that we can focus on what really matters?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, there is a responsibility to work as effectively as one can in opposition. I had experience between 1988 and 1990 in terms of working in minority situations. Ultimately political parties will do whatever is determined in the best interests of the different stakeholders which they represent.

I like to think the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada has done an exceptional job over the last while in terms of going out and consulting with Canadians, more than other leader inside this chamber, whether it is the express tour, the “Open Mikes”, townhall on Internet and so forth. I suspect the government will fall, or it will call the election when it calls the election. The point is when we have legislation here, we have a responsibility to do the best we can in terms of coming up with ideas that could improve it. Hopefully government has the wisdom to see good ideas and allow them to pass.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, like everyone else, I join my colleagues in welcoming the new member for Winnipeg North. I have been here for six and a half years and I do not want to talk to him like he is the rookie because he has been in politics since 1988. Therefore, I am the rookie asking him a question.

In regard to police morale, I have noticed that over the last while the morale has gone down in certain areas. I am from a rural riding and the member is from an urban one. We have predominantly the force representation from the RCMP, so this debate is quite germane to my riding.

Earlier I spoke about single member detachments and I would like to ask the member about that. Dealing with the police and the police associations involved with those police, because I assume it is mostly city police he deals with, how is the morale today? Is it the same as it was?

• (1745)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, it is a very good question and I appreciate the kind words. The member is the one that has the experience at this end.

*Government Orders*

When we take a look at the morale, whether it is RCMP, Winnipeg Police, I do not believe the government has done a good job in terms of improving their morale. Why I say that is if we ask a police officer or a RCMP officer what do they need today, they will tell us there is a need for additional policing. The government made a commitment for additional policing. I do not know the exact number. I think it was 2,000 or so officers or somewhere around there. The commitment was made to increase the hard resources of just personnel. That has never materialized.

I do not believe the government has done what it could have done to improve morale, such as in legislation such as this. I do not believe the government has really done what it could to protect the integrity of the RCMP. One could get into the whole issue of the gun registration and how supportive the government of the day has been with regard to that.

At the end of the day, the government has done nothing to improve the morale. If it were not for that natural instinct for our fine officers in uniform to do so well, it would be a lot more challenging. However, because of the good work they do and their sense of commitment, we can feel relatively safe and comfortable in knowing they do the very best they can, given the circumstances in which they are.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague before me said, Bill C-43 should go to committee, but I personally have some problems with it. The RCMP rank and file need to be given voice, not be forced to take direction from the government in the way members may or may not want to be represented.

One of the faults of one of the options in the bill is giving the commissioner of the RCMP more power and that staff relations representatives would have to report to the commissioner. I can see nothing but problems with that kind of proposal.

There were three concerns that led the Ontario superior court to find that the RCMP staff relations representative system was invalid. First, RCMP members had not had the opportunity to decide whether the SRRP was the system in which they wished to associate for labour relations purposes. In other words, they did not make a decision on that through a voting process. Second, the staff relations representative system was not sufficiently independent from RCMP management. Third, while RCMP management listened carefully to the views of staff relations representatives, it retained the ultimate decision-making authority in the SRRP consultative process.

Those are the three concerns that led to the Ontario superior court finding that the RCMP staff relations representative system was invalid. I wanted to lay those facts on the table.

After the superior court's decision, staff relationship representatives decided to comprehensively assess the labour relations needs of RCMP members and their satisfaction with the current SRRP through a quantitative study. Pollara Inc., an independent polling firm, was engaged for that assessment and 6,147 members took part in the survey. The survey has produced reliable and accurate information that can now be used to improve the SRRP to better serve the 22,000 RCMP members and address the superior court's concerns.

It also found that 65% of RCMP members who expressed an opinion were satisfied with the system and 71% of RCMP members preferred to associate in either the current SRRP or a modified version of it. I believe every member of Parliament received a copy of that Pollara report.

It is clear that the wishes of the very strong majority of the 22,000 of RCMP members were not reflected in this bill in total.

Let me be clear. Contrary to the ruling of the Ontario superior court, Bill C-43 would offer no real choice to RCMP members for how they wanted to be represented, either in a union or non-union model of representation. It is either a union or a body established by the RCMP commissioner.

Maybe there are some other alternatives that need to be considered, especially after the staff relations representatives went to their members and looked at potentially different ways of doing it. In committee that discussion can be held and if there are alternatives or other views brought forward that relate more to what the rank and file prefer, then that is the value of the bill being before committee. I hope the committee is open-minded enough to look at all the alternatives at play.

● (1750)

There is a feeling out there, accurate or not I am not entirely sure, that the bill could split the RCMP's existing membership into regular, civilian and special constable bodies. Some of the representatives from my province have made that very clear to me, especially those from the civilian sector of the RCMP.

As a result of this legislation, the RCMP could be treated like any other public sector union. That is one of the possibilities. That means labour groups, like PSAC, would use it as a benchmark in contract negotiations.

Finally, Bill C-43 also endangers, according to some within the RCMP, hard-fought benefits currently held by RCMP members.

There are some very strong concerns being expressed by current staff relations representatives. They are finding that the bill as currently proposed is unacceptable to a fairly strong majority of the RCMP members across the country.

The staff relations representatives informed me that they believe the RCMP is at a crossroads and faces a number of difficult challenges, especially with respect to leadership and representation. Canada's police force does not need further uncertainty and more distractions.

Members of the RCMP would certainly prefer to be focusing their energy on improving public safety rather than worrying about whether the federal government will impose a union on them.

*Government Orders*

I would also say to those RCMP members that it is critical they involve themselves in this hearing process and make their views known, because if this new system is going to work with an important police force and everything its members do nationally and internationally, and the fact that they are seen as such a model for the country, they need to involve themselves in these discussions and make their voices heard. At the end of the day, whether it is this specific legislation or improved legislation, the rank and file, certainly the majority, have to be in accommodation with this legislation.

From their perspective, Bill C-43 would create some significant problems. It is a top priority for the staff relations representatives and the membership of the RCMP. The members of the RCMP have been represented by the staff relations representatives for the past 36 years on all issues affecting members' welfare and their dignity as a force.

The current staff relations representative program is non-union representation, but in the main it has worked reasonably well. An alternative or somewhat of a take on the current system is not in this bill as it is currently written.

I would refer MPs to the RCMP magazine, *Frontline Perspective*, which I think has gone to most offices. In the 2010 issue, volume 4, number 2, there is a major article about Bill C-43 from representatives of the RCMP.

I want to read a couple of paragraphs from the article. I would encourage members to read the magazine article. It goes through the bill in detail. It talks about some of the good parts, some of the bad parts and some of the questionable parts of the bill.

• (1755)

It does show that the staff relations representatives who have written the article are into the debate in doing a critical analysis of the bill. We as members of Parliament have an obligation to take this seriously, to listen and analyze, and hopefully improve the bill as a result.

I quote from the article written by Brian Roach and Abe Townsend on page six of *Frontline Perspective*:

The Staff Relations Representative Program has developed through consultation with its membership a clear alternative to Bill C-43. The program forwarded this to its membership on September 29, 2010 and is noted below for your information, reference and discussion at this time.

The legislation limited the options to either a union or a body appointed by the Commissioner. This was clearly unacceptable based on the results of the recent survey of members' wishes. We have shared this document with government officials and have included it here for your feedback.

This document is not a done deal. It is simply a proposal that we would like your input on. The SRR Program believes that it reflects your views while respecting the Charter of Rights. We urge you to review this document and other associated material.

I am not going to read the whole article; I think members can do that. There is certainly mixed views on this. There is certainly mixed views within my own party and with my colleague, who will speak next. I think that is what this place is all about. It is all about debate and discussion.

To close, I have tried to outline some of the concerns that have been expressed to me by the rank and file of the RCMP and staff relations representatives. These are serious concerns.

The bottom line for me, having been a former solicitor general, is if the system is going to work, we certainly do not want all the power and authority within the commissioner's office. At the end of the day, for the system to work well, the rank and file have to be onside with how their views can be represented and brought forward, whether it is management administration within the force itself, or whether it is bringing forward issues from a policy perspective that the RCMP believes government should adopt and move forward with.

I will close with that, but again, if members want to get a very in-depth analysis of one side of the argument, I refer them to what I consider to be a very well researched, well done and quite open-minded critical analysis of Bill C-43 by the staff relations representative body of the RCMP itself.

• (1800)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things I have noticed over the while.

First, one of the reasons morale has gone down so badly in the RCMP is the appointment of a civilian member as commissioner. I would like the member's view on whether a civilian commissioner should be given additional powers over the rank and file of the RCMP as well as senior management. It scares the living daylights out of me that this particular commissioner could have additional powers.

Second, in 2008, the member well knows that the pay council of the RCMP negotiated a 3.5% increase in salaries for 2009 and on. Unfortunately, I believe on December 21 or 23, in an email from Treasury Board to all RCMP members in the country, that pay increase was rescinded and the increase was changed to 1.5% with no consultation whatsoever. If we wonder why RCMP members want to unionize, it is to stop this nonsense happening with a dictatorial process of the government of the time.

Instead of being proactive, the government has reacted to a court decision. We firmly believe that the RCMP should be allowed to join the association or union of their choice if that is what they so desire. Other aspects of the RCMP and the civilian members can decide on their own if they wish to unionize or have an association. This would be the true democratic process.

I would like the member's comments on whether the RCMP should be allowed to determine for themselves who should represent their issues when it comes to negotiating pay and benefits with the Government of Canada.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, there were a number of questions in there. I believe it is the rank and file that should make the decision.

I want to make it very clear, and I targeted my remarks at the current staff relations representative system, that option is not in there. If members of the RCMP decide they want to go to a union, then that is their choice. If they want to go to somewhat of a take on the current system and maybe report to Treasury Board and not the commissioner, that should be their choice too, but the current bill only allows two choices, either unionize or report to the commissioner of the RCMP.

*Government Orders*

The hon. member asked should the commissioner have more power than he currently has. In my view, absolutely not. That is my personal point of view. It would be giving the commissioner too much power. If an individual has a problem within the system, somebody who is a staff relations representative has to report to the commissioner, but the commissioner is the person's boss. It makes no sense at all. No, there should be no power to the commissioner of the RCMP.

From my point of view, the Government of Canada made a terrible mistake in not appointing a commissioner from the rank and file. The next time it appoints a commissioner of the RCMP, it should be from the rank and file.

● (1805)

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member for Malpeque, as a former solicitor general, has a bit of experience in this area.

I have followed this case for some time. In fact, I have had several bills doing what the government apparently is not prepared to do, and well before the MacDonnell case.

Very specific to this point about the power of the commissioner, would the hon. member enlighten this House as to whether or not what the government proposes falls short of the test in MacDonnell, which of course requires that there be an offset at the very least to the power of the commissioner? That offset would be a form of collective bargaining or the right for individuals, rank and file members of the RCMP, to have more than what they have currently, which amounts to a management-run union.

I am wondering if the hon. member could give us his opinion as to whether or not the test, the demand and the requirement of 18 months would probably fail as a result of the government monkeying around with legislation and wording.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, I could not agree with the member more. I am not sure of the number of bills the member has put forward, but probably there is no other member in the House who has put as much effort into putting legislation forward that would deal with some of the problems that members of the RCMP felt were occurring to them. The member had the courage, did the research and did the drafting to put that into legislation.

The government took parts of that. For whatever reason it did not take the whole package, and some critical areas were missing. That is, as the member said, the kind of off ramp where it would not be a management-run union. It would allow the rank and file a ways and means of having their say without fear from management, but being able to represent themselves as rank and file members, expressing their points of view, expressing their complaints into a system without fear of retaliation as a result.

Those very important aspects of the member's work were left out as the government took what it desired and drafted this piece of legislation that is called Bill C-43.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I also look forward to my colleague's speech. I think it was former Bill C-427 by the member for Pickering—Scarborough East.

I have a question for the hon. member for Malpeque, the legend from Malpeque, as we call him. When it comes to this legislation, I find it, in many regards, highly restrictive, which he has already touched on. However, could he bear down on some of the details of just how restrictive this is? One of them is the civilian staff being dictated to about its membership and about the way it is to be organized.

We always hope that when progressive legislation is brought forward in this place, especially when it comes to the rights to collective bargaining, we like to raise the bar to better representation than a group had before. This one, however, lowers the bar in many respects according to the member's speech.

The article that he pointed out is a good illustration. If he could comment on that, plus just how restrictive it is and what key amendments should be made here.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor made it perfectly clear when he said that the bill was very restrictive. One of the concerns that I expressed in my remarks had to do with how it could divide people within the force who feel they are all part of the same system. They could basically defy or separate in terms of their representation, from special constables to civilian members to regular members. These people all work together in one way or another. It is a total system.

Yes, there are some people on the highways and some people in criminal investigation but those people have to be connected throughout the system to do their job appropriately. The bill has the potential of dividing them into silos, which is the last thing we want to see. We see enough of that in this particular city between departments. The bill is worrisome in that regard.

The bottom line is that the bill does not allow the third alternative, which the current representative program is trying to put forward, and that is a dilemma. There needs to be that alternative so that the rank and file can make decisions on the system they want under appropriate choices.

● (1810)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today in this debate regarding the RCMP.

Although I do thank the government for bringing forward some form of legislation, the unfortunate part is that it is reactionary and not very proactive. In fact, if it were not for the courts, it would not have done this at all. It is unfortunate when a group of Canadian heroes, the RCMP and their associates, need to take an issue of association and unionization to the courts to get a fair hearing.

We know that the RCMP members, or gendarmes in Quebec, have asked for many years for the right to form a union or an association of their choice to deal with their pay and benefits when it comes to their management or with the government of the day.

*Government Orders*

Let us just go into a little history of the RCMP. It is probably one of Canada's most recognized institutions and, unlike my Liberal colleague from Winnipeg who spoke earlier, it is not a red coat. It is a red serge. Redcoats, of course, are British, and the Americans know all too well what the redcoats mean. However, it is the red serge in Canada and it is an honoured tradition for the men and women of the RCMP to wear the red serge. I have lived in British Columbia, Yukon and now Nova Scotia and I have had the chance to travel through Canada and I have yet to meet an officer who is not proud to wear the stetson and the red serge.

Their families are also part of the uniform. As members know, just like our military, they also have to deal with a tremendous amount of stress when a member of their family, either a man or a woman, goes out and does his or her job for Canada on the domestic side, as well as the many RCMP officers who are serving overseas. Many of them are in Afghanistan right now training the Afghan police force on how to run a functional police service in that country. They are also in Haiti and other countries around the world.

The reality is that it is a fundamental right for workers, in this case police officers, to form a union or an association of their choice. It is not the government's right to dictate what that union or association should be. For this bill to put handcuffs on what the RCMP may do in the future is really unfortunate and, to be quite honest, scandalous. To give a civilian commissioner any more powers than he or she already has will not go anywhere.

It was a sad day in this country when the Conservatives picked Mr. Elliott to be the Commissioner of the RCMP. Can members imagine for one second if they were to appoint a civilian as the CDS of the military? There would be an uproar in this country over that. What the Conservatives have said to those rank and file RCMP officers is, "If your goal is to one day be the top dog in the RCMP, forget about it, because we will appoint our friends, whomever we wish to get in there".

For years we heard from Liberals and Conservatives, when it came to RCMP investigations, that the RCMP was an independent body and that it will investigate on its own what it wishes to do. However, the minute Mr. Elliott was appointed as Commissioner of the RCMP, the tentacles of the PCO and the PMO were right into the RCMP. With the recent resignation and denial of many of the senior officers of the RCMP, there is no question that the hands of the Prime Minister and the hands of the PCO are all over that, which is most unfortunate.

I attended a Depot ceremony in Regina recently at its national mourning and there had to be at least 1,000 people there. The tension could be cut with a knife between the assistant commissioners of the RCMP and Mr. Elliott. It was a beautiful day and we were all there on a beautiful sunny morning but we could feel the ice out there and that should not have to be.

The members of the RCMP should have tremendous respect for their commissioner and they would have that respect if that commissioner were one of their own. I would hope that the next commissioner comes from the rank and file of the RCMP, exactly the way it should be.

On this legislation, it is again up to the individual RCMP members and its membership to determine what is best for them. If they wish to have an association, if they wish to have a union or whatever it is they wish to do, that should be up to them, independent of government, independent of politics and independent of the commissioner. The commissioner should have absolutely nothing to say about this. It should be free and independent. I am hoping those changes at the committee stage will happen.

● (1815)

When it comes to the civilian members, the bill is so poorly drafted that the civilian members of the RCMP feel they are trapped. They do not understand why they may be dragged into something that they do not wish to have.

If the government had consulted with these members, which it did not, it would understand quite clearly that the civilian members of the RCMP, independent of the men and women who serve as RCMP members, should have the right, if they wish, to form an association or a union of their type or keep the status quo. That is up to them to determine. It is not up to the commissioner, it is not up to us as politicians and it is especially not up to the government to determine that for them.

Unfortunately, because I know the government's heart is not in this, which is why it is such a poorly drafted bill, a reactionary to a court decision, I suspect quite strongly that the government will drag it out through committee, drag it out through the summer and, if it comes back for third reading, it will send back to that other place where those Conservative sycophants we call senators will probably delay it until the next election, and, if we have an election, it will die. I suspect that is the Conservatives' goal at the end of the day. We have seen what these senators have done to good legislation before. When we have a government that says that it would never ever appoint Conservative senators, that it would never ever appoint its friends to the other place and it ends up appointing over 35 of them, we can understand where this is going to go.

Unfortunately, a lot of this debate and discussion will probably be all for naught because we will probably have an election within the year and this bill will probably die an unfortunate natural death.

What does this say to the morale of the men and women who serve our valoured RCMP? What we are basically saying is that the government has recognized that there is a court decision and that the government has brought forward legislation.

However, if the government really wanted to, it could work with the opposition to come up with something that works, is fair, is balanced and is truly representative of what the members of the RCMP wish to have. Then we could get this through committee fairly quickly, on to the Senate and, hopefully, although I do not think it will happen, get this through the Senate so we can say to the men and women of the RCMP, the civilian members and others that we truly respect what they wish to do, which is to have fair and collective bargaining with the management of the RCMP and the government of the day.

### *Government Orders*

I remember 2008 all too well when the current government negotiated for months with the pay council of the RCMP, an independent body to negotiate pay and benefits for the RCMP. It agreed, after months of talking, to 3.5%. What happened just before Christmas 2008? An email was sent by the Treasury Board rolling back and rescinding the 3.5% to 1.5%, no ifs, ands or buts, that was it.

There is absolutely no aspect of discussion for the members in the pay council to go back to the Treasury Board and say “Whoa. We negotiated this in fairness and in good faith and you turned around and arbitrarily destroyed it”. That is what the current government did.

One minute it talks about law and order and says that it is the party of crime fighters and everything, and yet the men and women who, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, maintain that law and order are treated with complete disregard and disdain by that government over there. It is really unfortunate. It is no wonder that morale is down?

Another aspect is that RCMP members have been asking for years for a veterans' independent program, very similar to that which veterans get. Right now, as we know, World War II veterans or Korean War veterans with a disability, or a spouse of a veteran with have a disability, can apply for a veterans' independence program that allows them to stay in their house even longer. The government would provide services for groundskeeping and housekeeping services. For those who receive the service, it is a tremendous benefit for them. RCMP members have been asking for years for the exact same benefit and for years they have been denied over and over again.

● (1820)

When we talk about heroes in the military and the armed forces, we should talk about RCMP members in the exact same breath. Many of them have served overseas, and many of them do the same type of work within Canada's borders.

Imagine what goes through the mind of an RCMP officer when he or she has to extract three children from a car accident on Highway 401 at 3 o'clock on a Sunday morning. Years later when these officers are looking for help, we should be able to provide them the assistance they need. One of the ways we could help them would be through the veterans independence program, to ensure they are treated with respect and dignity when they get older and retire.

We will support sending this bill to committee and hopefully we will be able to convince the government and the other opposition parties that the RCMP members themselves should be able to dictate exactly who will represent them and who will not. The days of the government telling the RCMP members in any way, shape or form what they should be doing or what they cannot do have to end, because that simply is not right.

I have heard from members of the Liberal Party, the Bloc Québécois and Conservative members why they think this bill should go to committee.

We are hopeful that rank and file RCMP members right across the country will have the opportunity, through either the Internet or personal visits, to talk to members of Parliament and tell us why they

think this legislation needs to be changed, why it needs to be more representative of the men and women of the RCMP. I hope the committee will travel across the country to big and small cities, to wherever the RCMP is located.

While I am on my feet, I want to personally congratulate several members of the RCMP who have done yeomen's work for the RCMP over the years.

Mr. Jim Hill of Fletchers Lake, Nova Scotia, has given 30 years of service to the RCMP but unfortunately had to be medically released. This individual did tremendous work for his country and for the red serge throughout his career.

Another individual I would like to thank is Mr. Murray Brown. After 37 years, Mr. Brown will be retiring from the RCMP at the end of this year. He is now in staff relations with the RCMP and has done a tremendous job of educating members of Parliament and senators, literally anyone who will listen to him, about the value of the RCMP and the problems that members and their families go through, everything from insurance programs to pension clawbacks, to VIP, to PTSD, everything. Mr. Brown has been absolutely fantastic in what he has been able to do. In fact, he was instrumental in getting to most members of Parliament and senators the magazine that my colleague from Malpeque talked about.

Another big thanks to Mr. Abe Townsend, formerly of Nova Scotia and now living in Ontario. He works very hard in staff relations for the RCMP.

It is very important that members of the RCMP have an unbiased and unprejudiced opportunity to present their concerns and issues directly to senior management without fear of retribution. We have already heard about what happens to senior management in the RCMP when they raise their concerns about a particular commissioner. Their head gets cut off and they are removed or retire suspiciously early. That has to stop.

I firmly believe, and I am sure that every member of Parliament in this House believes, that the RCMP is one of the most trusted and valued institutions in Canada. It has had some bumps along the way, but the reality is that the RCMP is one of the institutions that makes this country great. I for one, and I am sure others, am very proud to know that there are many members in every community across the country who are doing a fantastic job for all of us.

At the end of the day, all members of Parliament have to respect the men and women of the RCMP and allow them, either through legislation or whatever, the opportunity to determine for themselves what is best when it comes to either forming a union or an association or whatever it is they would like to do. If we get to that point and truly respect the men and women of the RCMP, that will be a great day in Canada .

● (1825)

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly like this member and his ability to talk until everybody else is asleep, which is definitely a skill that I do not have and I wish I did. He can talk and talk and he is very effective at it.



My difficulty is that this particular member and the NDP never walk the walk. They talk the talk, and this gentleman is particularly good at that, but he never walks the walk.

That is something that I would like him to do this time. Just like in the veterans affairs committee, talk is cheap, quite frankly, and he may talk yes, but he never votes yes. That is the difficulty. He never stands up behind our men and women in uniform, whether it be our military or the RCMP.

In fact, a few minutes ago I asked one of his colleagues, another NDP member, how many civilian members he actually talked to, how many he surveyed on what they wanted, to find out whether he had a good study and some good background on what he is suggesting today. I did not hear a response from that NDP member. I am hoping that this NDP member will be able to tell me how many civilian members he actually talked to first-hand.

If memory serves me correctly, he voted against increasing depot investment for the RCMP. He voted against paying RCMP members when they were being trained.

Why now is he standing and saying yes, yes, yes? Is he going to vote yes, or is he going to vote no? Is he going to stand behind the

### *Government Orders*

men and women in uniform, or is he going to again not do so? That is what I want to know.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** To the civilian question, Mr. Speaker, nine is the answer. I have spoken to nine civilians in my riding.

Secondly, it is so good of the Conservatives. They bring forward a budget that has 1,000 spending items. They take two items out of the budget and say, "These are good but you voted against it; you voted against the entire budget".

The reality is that what my hon. colleague, the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca, is asking me to do is to vote confidence in him and his Conservative government.

I can assure the House that it will be a very, very sad day in this country when I vote confidence in the Conservative Government of Canada.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The next time the bill is before the House, the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore will have seven minutes remaining for questions and comments.

*[For continuation of proceedings see Part B]*

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# CONTENTS

Monday, December 13, 2010

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### Criminal Code

Bill C-510. Second reading .....	7105
Mrs. Block .....	7105
Ms. Bonsant .....	7106
Ms. Ashton .....	7106
Mr. Rathgeber .....	7108
Mr. Shipley .....	7109
Mr. Anderson .....	7110
Mr. Bruinooge .....	7111
Division on motion deferred .....	7112

### Suspension of Sitting

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:55 a.m.) .....	7112
--	------

### Sitting Resumed

(The House resumed at 12:00) .....	7112
------------------------------------	------

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### Serious Time for the Most Serious Crime Act

Bill S-6. Report stage .....	7112
Mr. Lemay .....	7112
Mr. Comartin .....	7113
Mr. Maloway .....	7113
Mrs. Jennings .....	7113
Mr. Comartin .....	7115
Mr. Maloway .....	7115
Mr. Comartin .....	7115
Mr. Maloway .....	7116
Mr. Bagnell .....	7117
Division on Motion No. 1 deferred .....	7117
Division on Motion No. 2 deferred .....	7117
Division on Motion No. 3 deferred .....	7117
Divisions on Motions Nos. 1, 2 and 3 stand deferred .....	7118

### Royal Canadian Mounted Police Modernization Act

Mr. Day .....	7118
Bill C-43. Second reading .....	7118
Ms. Coady .....	7119
Mr. Maloway .....	7119
Ms. Coady .....	7120
Mr. Stoffer .....	7123
Mr. Marston .....	7123
Mr. Maloway .....	7124
Mr. Bagnell .....	7124
Mrs. DeBellefeuille .....	7124
Mr. Laforest .....	7126

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Compassionate Volunteerism

Mr. Woodworth .....	7127
---------------------	------

### Community Volunteerism

Ms. Sgro .....	7127
----------------	------

### Postal Services to Deployed Troops

Mr. Bachand .....	7127
-------------------	------

### Public Security Personnel

Mr. Stoffer .....	7127
-------------------	------

### Centre Dufferin District High School War Memorial

Mr. Tilson .....	7127
------------------	------

### Terence Bay Lighthouse

Mr. Regan .....	7128
-----------------	------

### Charitable Giving

Mr. Braid .....	7128
-----------------	------

### Artists in Ottawa

Mrs. Lavallée .....	7128
---------------------	------

### International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church

Ms. Hoepfner .....	7128
--------------------	------

### Human Rights

Mr. Cotler .....	7129
------------------	------

### Aerospace Industry

Mr. Dechert .....	7129
-------------------	------

### Official Languages

Mr. Godin .....	7129
-----------------	------

### Justice

Mr. Gourde .....	7129
------------------	------

### High Tides

Mr. Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques) .....	7129
---	------

### Human Rights

Mr. Lamoureux .....	7129
---------------------	------

### Justice

Mr. Fast .....	7130
----------------	------

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### National Defence

Mr. Ignatieff .....	7130
Mr. MacKay .....	7130
Mr. Ignatieff .....	7130
Mr. MacKay .....	7130
Mr. Ignatieff .....	7130
Mr. MacKay .....	7130
Mr. Garneau .....	7131
Mr. MacKay .....	7131
Mr. Garneau .....	7131
Mr. MacKay .....	7131

### The Environment

Mr. Duceppe .....	7131
Mr. Baird .....	7131
Mr. Duceppe .....	7131
Mr. Baird .....	7131

**High Tides in Eastern Quebec**

Mr. Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques) .....	7131
Mr. Lebel .....	7131
Mr. Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques) .....	7132
Mr. Lebel .....	7132

**Financial Institutions**

Mr. Layton .....	7132
Mr. Flaherty .....	7132

**The Economy**

Mr. Layton .....	7132
Mr. Baird .....	7132

**Foreign Takeovers**

Mr. Layton .....	7132
Mr. Clement .....	7132

**Health**

Mr. Dosanjh .....	7133
Mrs. Aglukkaq .....	7133
Mr. Dosanjh .....	7133
Mrs. Aglukkaq .....	7133

**Millennium Scholarships**

Mrs. Mendes .....	7133
Ms. Finley .....	7133
Mr. Savage .....	7133
Ms. Finley .....	7133

**Guaranteed Income Supplement**

Mrs. DeBellefeuille .....	7133
Ms. Finley .....	7134
Mrs. DeBellefeuille .....	7134
Ms. Finley .....	7134

**Canada Revenue Agency**

Mr. Carrier .....	7134
Mr. Ashfield .....	7134
Mr. Carrier .....	7134
Mr. Ashfield .....	7134

**Canada-U.S. Border**

Mr. Oliphant .....	7134
Mr. Kent .....	7134
Mr. Oliphant .....	7134
Mr. Kent .....	7134

**Haiti**

Ms. Neville .....	7135
Ms. Oda .....	7135
Mr. Coderre .....	7135
Mr. Kent .....	7135

**Public Safety**

Mr. Breitkreuz .....	7135
Mr. Toews .....	7135

**Canada-U.S. Border**

Mr. Dewar .....	7135
Mr. Toews .....	7135

**Afghanistan**

Mr. Dewar .....	7135
Ms. Oda .....	7135

**Employment Insurance**

Mr. Lessard .....	7136
Ms. Finley .....	7136
Mrs. Beaudin .....	7136
Ms. Finley .....	7136

**Elections Canada**

Ms. Bennett .....	7136
Mr. Poilievre .....	7136
Mrs. Jennings .....	7136
Mr. Poilievre .....	7136

**National Defence**

Mr. Harris (St. John's East) .....	7136
Mr. MacKay .....	7137
Mr. Harris (St. John's East) .....	7137
Mr. MacKay .....	7137

**Aerospace Industry**

Mr. Young .....	7137
Mr. Clement .....	7137

**Railway Service**

Mr. McCallum .....	7137
Mr. Merrifield .....	7137

**Highway Infrastructure**

Mr. Bouchard .....	7137
Mr. Jean .....	7137

**Pensions**

Mr. Marston .....	7138
Mr. Clement .....	7138

**Citizenship and Immigration**

Mr. Norlock .....	7138
Mr. Kenney .....	7138

**Railway Service**

Mr. McCallum .....	7138
Mr. Merrifield .....	7138

**Presence in Gallery**

The Speaker .....	7138
-------------------	------

**Points of Order**

<b>Statements by Members</b>	
Mrs. Lavallée .....	7138

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS****Canada Account Annual Report**

Mr. Van Loan .....	7139
--------------------	------

**Foreign Affairs**

Mr. Obhrai .....	7139
------------------	------

**Government Response to Petitions**

Mr. Lukiwski .....	7139
--------------------	------

**Immigration and Refugee Protection Act**

Ms. Chow .....	7139
Bill C-604. Introduction and first reading .....	7139

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	7139
<b>National Strategy for Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassaemic Disorders Act</b>	
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North) .....	7139
Bill C-605. Introduction and first reading .....	7139
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	7140
<b>Petitions</b>	
<b>Foreign Affairs</b>	
Mr. McKay .....	7140
<b>Millennium Goals</b>	
Mrs. Lavallée .....	7140
<b>Veterans Affairs</b>	
Mrs. Lavallée .....	7140
Ms. Mathysen .....	7140
<b>Prevention of Coerced Abortion</b>	
Mr. Bruinooge .....	7140
<b>Seniors</b>	
Mr. Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord) .....	7140
<b>Afghanistan</b>	
Mr. Maloway .....	7140
<b>Vale Inco</b>	
Ms. Ashton .....	7140
<b>International Trade</b>	
Mr. Valeriote .....	7141
<b>Questions on the Order Paper</b>	
Mr. Lukiwski .....	7141
<b>Questions Passed as Orders for Returns</b>	
Mr. Lukiwski .....	7141
<b>Request for Emergency Debate</b>	
<b>Situation in Haiti</b>	
The Speaker .....	7142
Mr. Coderre .....	7142
<b>Speaker's Ruling</b>	
The Speaker .....	7142

<b>Privilege</b>	
<b>Statements by Minister and Parliamentary Secretary regarding KAIROS</b>	
Mr. McKay .....	7142
Mr. Abbott .....	7145
Mr. Valeriote .....	7145
Ms. Deschamps .....	7147

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

<b>Royal Canadian Mounted Police Modernization Act</b>	
Bill C-43. Second reading .....	7147
Mr. Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) .....	7147
Mr. Regan .....	7150
Mr. Maloway .....	7150
Mr. Holland .....	7150
Mr. Marston .....	7151
Mr. Holland .....	7151
Mr. Maloway .....	7154
Mr. Simms .....	7154
Mr. Maloway .....	7155
Mr. Simms .....	7157
Mr. Jean .....	7158
<b>Business of the House</b>	
Mr. Casson .....	7158
Motion .....	7158
(Motion agreed to) .....	7158
<b>Royal Canadian Mounted Police Modernization Act</b>	
Bill C-43. Second reading .....	7158
Mr. Marston .....	7158
Mr. Lamoureux .....	7159
Mr. Maloway .....	7161
Mr. Blais .....	7161
Mr. Simms .....	7161
Mr. Easter .....	7162
Mr. Stoffer .....	7163
Mr. McTeague .....	7164
Mr. Simms .....	7164
Mr. Stoffer .....	7164
Mr. Jean .....	7166

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CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, December 13, 2010**  
**(Part B)**

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

## **CONTENTS**

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



# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 13, 2010

[Continuation of proceedings from part A]

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## EMERGENCY DEBATE

[Translation]

### SITUATION IN HAITI

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the consideration of a motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the situation in Haiti.

● (1825)

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.)** moved:

That this House do now adjourn.

He said: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank you for allowing us to hold this debate, which, in my opinion, is extremely relevant. A number of hon. members will have the opportunity to discuss the future of Haiti in a non-partisan manner. I would also like to say that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Winnipeg South Centre, who will speak about the situation of women in Haiti in particular.

This is an extremely important and non-partisan issue. In view of the meeting this morning between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Affairs, this debate will allow us to shed some light on this issue.

Why must this debate be held today? I would like to quote Dany Laferrière, who said, "You are really dead when there is no one left on this earth who remembers your name." We must not forget the Haitians. We must examine the situation. We must encourage and support them. The purpose of this debate is to send a message to our friends in Haiti to let them know that Canada is a player, that Canada wants to help them and that Canada will support them. But are we doing enough? Tonight's debate will help us to gain a better understanding of what is happening.

We must bear in mind that because of the earthquake on January 12, 2010, which killed over 250,000 people, there are more than 1.5 million homeless people in the country. The cholera epidemic has affected hundreds of thousands of people and, sadly, has already caused 2,200 deaths. According to UN medical experts, that number could double.

We need transparency and we need to know where the money is going. We must ask ourselves what is causing the current impasse. We have to remember that an election took place recently. The first

round was on November 28, 2010. On December 7, the provisional electoral council announced the results. This sent shock waves through the country, because the people strongly suspected electoral fraud. People feel they have been tricked, and that the vote in no way reflects the current situation or the election results.

Today I would like to talk about several things, including possible solutions. I think this can be a positive, constructive debate. We will talk about the election and we must consider various scenarios. We would also like to discuss the possibility of having a special envoy specifically for Haiti, as we do for other countries. Of course we will talk about the cholera outbreak and what we can do to stop it. It seems that NGOs are experiencing some difficulties. Is there enough humanitarian aid? Is it being used wisely? We need to examine the possibility of sending a special force, the disaster assistance response team or DART—although, as we know, the Haitian government must request it—which could play a leading role in this health and humanitarian crisis.

I am extremely concerned. My interest in Haiti dates back over 25 years, and I have visited the country many times. My duties in a previous government allowed me to experience the Haitian reality first hand. Haiti has been through considerable turmoil and still today, they seem to be caught in a never-ending nightmare.

The Canadian government, no matter the political persuasion, has always invested in Haiti through CIDA. Haiti has always received the most aid or has been one of the highest priorities for Canada. Unfortunately, in light of recent events, we believe that a storm is brewing. If we do nothing, if we do not take preventive action, chaos will most definitely ensue. We must not act out of fear. However, senators in that country—they were subsequently set straight, thank goodness—said that if it would take a civil war, then so be it. That is totally unacceptable.

I salute the work of the international community, which called for order. However, many things need to be taken into consideration. With regard to the elections, there are three scenarios. The first would be to allow the process to proceed and have a recount. The Minister of Foreign Affairs talked about this today.

● (1830)

All ambassadors accredited to Haiti signed a press release indicating that the process must be given a chance and that there should be a recount, and that the possibilities should then be examined. That was reiterated today.

*Standing Order 52*

Unfortunately, when we listen to the candidates leading the presidential race, we realize that it may not necessarily happen. Mirlande Manigat was the first to refuse to participate in the recount. Michel Martelli has also refused to participate. The other 12 presidential candidates, despite their poor results, unanimously declared that they would not accept a recount.

In my opinion, the role of the international community is to provide assistance. We are not there to dictate anything. We are there to provide guidance. We must provide technical assistance, and we must also encourage people and empower them. What is problematic is that the trust of the people and the candidates in the current government is dwindling.

We have to consider an interesting alternative. Since the first round of elections was held on November 28 and the runoff elections are to be held on January 16, the episcopal group and civil society are suggesting that the runoff election on January 16 become the first round with a simple majority.

There is a word in Creole that sounds exactly like a word in French and that is the word "magouille". The word "magouille" means exactly the same thing in French and in Creole: a shady deal. People do not trust the system because they wonder how a ballot box can be recounted when that box was stuffed in the first place. An alternative should be considered such that candidates will all run again, the difference being that the first past the post will be elected president. The same would apply to the legislative elections.

There is another option and that is to cancel the vote. To me, there is a problem with cancelling a vote and starting over. In 2004 there was a provisional government, a government of technocrats. Things started off well, but certain problems needed to be taken into consideration and I do not think it is adequate.

• (1835)

[English]

I truly believe that we have to give the process a chance. Our role is not to dictate a result. We are not there to pick a candidate and say this is our champion. This is not the case. Our role is to make sure we will respect the process. It is about democracy. We want to help the people cast their votes and make sure that the way it goes, the way the votes are calculated, will be accurate. This is the trust link that we have to build among the Haitian people.

Frankly, if the people who are supposed to accept the recount process are not willing to do so, I think we should go for another option.

[Translation]

A special envoy would allow us to develop political and diplomatic ties.

Since all of my colleagues will be speaking later, I will close by saying that the Creole language is quite descriptive and says exactly what it means. In Creole they say, "*Yon chen gen kat Patti Men, li p'ap ka pran yon sèl chemen.*" That means that a dog might have four legs, but it can only go down one path.

That is probably what we should do as politicians. There may be many possibilities, but we can only go down one path and that is the

path of freedom, hope and respect for the people. Let us help the people of Haiti restore this pearl of the Antilles to its glory days. *Ensem ensem nou fo Kin Ben Pa lagué.*

[English]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member has rightly pointed out, Haiti is a priority for Canada. Canada has always stood up for the people of Haiti. When the earthquake took place, Canada stood up. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the minister responsible for CIDA worked very hard.

We, including NGOs from all over the country, have contributed a tremendous amount of money. We have invested heavily there. I agree with the hon. member that there are fault lines gradually coming. The elections he talked about, these are the fault lines. As members will note when the minister speaks and everybody else speaks, we are heavily engaged in trying to close those fault lines. We will work together in this aspect to ensure that.

I just want to remind my colleague on the other side, when he talks about the special envoy, that a former Governor General, the Hon. Michaëlle Jean, has been appointed by the UN Secretary General as a special envoy to look at the case of Haiti. I think Canada has very much stood out at the front, and I am sure we will be working with him over the course of tonight as we discuss this important issue.

• (1840)

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point. If Michaëlle Jean is a special envoy for UNESCO, it means that UNESCO understands the role and the importance of that role.

We can have the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the minister responsible for CIDA, but they have tons of jobs and the world is big. However, there is red tape, there are some political issues we have to deal with and we can work with the ministers. To have a special envoy would help us be that link, that bridge builder, not only among the domestic venues in our own departments, but we are also focused on Haiti and at the same time we are working with our counterparts specifically on Haiti, and that is why it is important.

I have been a special adviser to the Prime Minister myself. Trust me, 24 hours a day was not enough. However, the issue right now is to seek stability. We need the kind of individuals who will be helpful in settling some issues. Sometimes at the diplomatic level there are ways, but at the political level, when we have a direct link with the diaspora, we can be part of that solution.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I obviously listened with interest to the member's intervention and what he was hoping would happen. Certainly, having this debate tonight is a good opportunity to discuss different ideas.

It is incredibly important right now to look at the priorities, and the priority right now is to save lives. Clearly, the cholera epidemic is having a huge impact. More than 1,000 people have lost their lives. We still have issues around prevention, et cetera, from the cholera epidemic.

*Standing Order 52*

I am wondering if the hon. member would like to express his concern about the sequence in which we deal with this problem. Of course, the post-election violence has exacerbated the problem, but I am hearing from NGOs who were on the ground over the weekend that they cannot get out to help the people who need help. So how do we do that in this period before whatever will happen in terms of a run-off or recount or whatever?

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Speaker, I just spoke half an hour ago with Port-au-Prince and there is a situation. However, if Haitians do not have the stability, they will have violence.

[*Translation*]

It is like embers—burning embers that are currently smouldering.

[*English*]

If they do not have that kind of stability right now, it will be even worse.

I agree with the hon. member, the priority is to save lives. They do not have water necessarily. That is why we should send DART. We should also protect the NGOs, because they cannot get out. However, we need to chew gum and walk at the same time. We need to focus on cholera, but if we do not settle the issue at the electoral level, it will be even worse.

Look what happened on the eve of December 7. There was death and violence all over the place, and it was spontaneous. It was not orchestrated by only one candidate. People were mad as hell, and because of that, there was some retaliation.

I really believe, like the hon. member, that our priority should be on the people, save lives, help them, but at the same time—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Unfortunately, the hon. member's time has expired. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this debate this evening.

One would be hard pressed in the modern era to identify a country outside of wartime that has faced so many catastrophes within such a short period of time, both natural and man-made.

As my colleague has indicated, within the last 11 months Haiti has been faced with an earthquake, with 250,000 people killed and 1.5 million people homeless and massive destruction of infrastructure in the country, and is now faced with the plague of cholera, which is an epidemic with over 2,000 people dead, tens of thousands at risk and an urgent need to address this.

As we heard very much in the news in the last days, there is a crisis of government and of governance as a result of an election for president in November, which was full of irregularities so we can doubt very much the veracity of the voting.

It is facing dire economic consequences as a result of the instability of the governance. There is violence in the streets, humanitarian work is virtually at a standstill and, as we have heard today, the electoral crisis is creating warnings that future humanitarian aid is at risk.

It is imperative that the people of Haiti assume responsibility but equally important is for governments like Canada to work to resolve the democratic impasse as soon as possible.

To my mind, the key issues, and my colleague identified them, are the violence in the country, the lack of stability and the cholera epidemic that is devastating the country.

We have heard some solutions put forward: increased deployment of DART, a special envoy and increased coordination. However what I want to speak to is the crisis of what is being reported as happening to women. Compounding the mayhem and somewhat unreported is what is being called Haiti's unaddressed catastrophe, the violence against women.

Research has been in place that has shown that, when there are catastrophes initiated by weather issues, gender has a profound impact. What we have seen, to give a bit of background, is that in 1980 with the eruption of Mount St. Helens, the police reported that domestic violence increased by 46%. Following the 1993 Missouri floods, the turn-away rates at shelters was over 110%, programs increased by 400% and more women and children were impacted by the floods than anticipated.

In the ice storm in our own country, the Montreal police chief reported that 25% of the calls were related to domestic violence.

What we have heard out of Haiti and what we have heard most eloquently from Taina Bien-Aimé, the executive director of the international women's rights organization Equality Now, who cites data from the U.S. Agency for International Development from 2006, is a direct link between humanitarian emergencies and the increased vulnerability of women and children to both sexual violence and exploitation.

We know that in Haiti, where sex tourism and human trafficking were a prospering business before the earthquake, violence and this kind of activity has increased many times over. In Haiti with the government in a shambles, women are frequently defenceless and frequently unprotected.

There are estimates that, prior to this situation, 72% of Haitian girls had been raped and 40% were victims of domestic violence. The havoc at play without the structures of government and the impact of cholera are widespread.

● (1845)

Taina Bien-Aimé wrote a very moving article describing what was happening to women in Haiti. She said:

Protection of human rights, particularly those of women and children, is as important as providing immediate medical attention, food and shelter. In Haiti, women come last in terms of protection from violence. One small example of the urgent need to establish special contingencies for women in post-earthquake intervention is underlined by images of men fist-fighting over UN-delivered food, while women, barely keeping hold of their babies, struggled in vain to reach the relief truck. Emergency assistance teams must ensure that coordinated security is in place to protect the most vulnerable and that the full participation of qualified women, in particular Haitian women, is secured to tackle gender issues in the response and management of disaster relief.

She went on to say:

*Standing Order 52*

Invariably, foreigners leave Haiti enchanted by the kindness, easy smile and resilience of its people. If we want to invest in Haiti's recovery through which prosperity and stability will replace despair and chaos, we must ensure that protective measures and security systems for women and children are in place.

Last September, the UN launched a new operation in Haiti to combat rape and gender-based violence. The UN police force of 200-strong were pressed into service in six of the high-risk camps sheltering 135,000 people. However, it also said at the time that it was impossible to assume complete security coverage in 1,300 camp, given the availability of forces from Haitian national police or the UN peacekeeping mission.

It is important that Canada make this a priority. There are many issues to be addressed in Haiti, but the violence against women, the marginalization of women is of supreme importance. There must be coordination with local governments, with national governments and local stakeholders that are interested, particularly with issues pertinent to women. They must be given the top of mind and priority of purpose.

I urge my colleagues across the way, in all of their negotiations, both with partners in the process of trying to address some of these issues, to remember that the issues particular to women are singular and must be addressed in a coordinated way.

• (1850)

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we all agree that violence against women is a horrific thing and has very strong negative consequences on society as a whole. The member has brought up a very important point on the violence against women.

However, I would like to discuss the statement she made that humanitarian work in Haiti had come to a standstill and that we were not addressing many of the issues.

I wish to advise her that Canada stands at the front to address the issue of cholera at this time. Let me just give an example of what Canada has done: \$2.5 million to the Pan-American Health Organization; \$2 million to UNICEF; \$700,000 to Médecins du Monde Canada; \$550,000 to Oxfam-Québec, \$1.3 million to World Vision. All of these NGOs are working very diligently with other donors as well to address the issue of cholera which, at this current time, is very important, as she has rightly pointed, as have others.

Canada is heavily engaged and during tonight's debate, we will indicate how Canada has been helping.

However, humanitarian assistance to Haiti has not stopped, as she has tried to say. It is ongoing and we will continue doing what we can, as will be elaborated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to assist the people of Haiti.

• (1855)

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, at no time did I suggest that humanitarian support to Haiti had stopped. I appreciate that Canada is funding many of the not-for-profit organizations, many of which are doing stellar work in extraordinary circumstances. What I am saying is it is very difficult to carry out this humanitarian work. Circumstances are difficult and conditions are uncertain and unsafe.

As we heard during the previous line of questioning, it is difficult to move around the country.

I do not want to treat this as a partisan issue. I am not suggesting that aid has stopped. I am saying that it is difficult to deliver that aid and it is incumbent upon us as a country to work with other countries and with Haitian officials to ensure that aid gets to those who need it.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is important that we focus on gender. As Haitians deal with the crisis, particularly after the elections and the violence, it is important that they play a leadership role as well as receive help. Does she have any comments on that?

The government, after a couple of years of being asked, has put forward an action plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the subsequent UN Security Council Resolution 1820. It calls for women to be central when dealing with post-conflict tenuous situations. Does she have an idea of how that resolution 1325 action plan can be put in place? Would this not be a good opportunity for the government to put its plan into action?

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, UN resolution 1325 is important. I recently had the opportunity to read the Government of Canada's action plan. Departmental officials have developed a fine plan. This is an opportunity for Canadians and for the women of Haiti to step up and be part of the negotiating process to prioritize women's issues. This is an opportunity for resolution 1325 and the subsequent resolution to be showcased. This is an opportunity for governments and countries to work together with women to make a difference.

[Translation]

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we reacted quickly and decisively to the earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12.

Canada took the initiative to organize the ministerial preparatory conference on Haiti in Montreal on January 25, less than two weeks after the earthquake. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the hon. member for Bourassa for his excellent co-operation and support in this regard. The conference made it possible to bring together key partners who are involved in the international efforts in Haiti, civil society representatives and the Haitian diaspora.

The purpose of the conference was to review the situation on the ground, advance coordination efforts and develop a clear vision for the country's recovery and reconstruction. Given the extent of the damage, participants also agreed that long-term assistance for at least 10 years would be necessary. I believe it would be helpful to remind the House of the three strategic objectives set in Montreal: strengthened democratic governance, sustained social and economic development and enduring stability and respect for the rule of law.

*Standing Order 52*

Almost a year after the earthquake, we are still a long way from achieving these objectives, as the current political crisis in Haiti so pointedly demonstrates. Let us take a moment to recall the work that Canada has already done in Haiti. In March 2010, at the International Donors Conference Towards a New Future for Haiti in New York, Canada committed \$400 million over two years for the reconstruction of Haiti to support the Government of Haiti's action plan and priorities. This funding is on top of Canada's long-term development aid to Haiti of \$550 million for the period 2006-11. The Government of Canada's total current commitment is over \$1 billion, making Haiti the primary beneficiary of Canadian aid in the Americas, second only to Afghanistan globally.

Among the reconstruction initiatives announced by the Government of Canada, I would like to draw attention to the \$30 million CIDA call for proposals from Canadian organizations in order to support short-term restoration and reconstruction projects in Haiti. CIDA also launched new initiatives, including the construction of temporary facilities for key Haitian government departments, a \$12 million investment; the reconstruction of the Gonaïves hospital, \$20 million; and the rebuilding of the Haitian National Police Academy, \$18 million.

The human and material losses resulting from the earthquake have also had a serious impact on the capability of Haitian security and justice organizations, which are crucial to running the country and to ensuring its stability. The Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force, START, a Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade initiative, has increased its financial contribution in order to tailor its response to new areas of need resulting from the earthquake. The annual average allocation of \$15 million has been increased to \$25 million for 2010-11, thereby enabling the task force to ramp up its commitment in its traditional response areas of police reform and prison and border management, and to add justice to its list of priorities.

The task force is working on strengthening the Haitian National Police by deploying Canadian police officers to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, MINUSTAH, so that they can play a role in training their Haitian counterparts.

●(1900)

The task force is also funding the reconstruction of new headquarters and the reconstruction of police stations in the areas affected by the earthquake, to help the Haitian National Police carry out its mandate and serve the public effectively.

To support the reform of the Haitian correctional system, the task force's contribution means that Canadian correctional officers can be assigned to MINUSTAH, with the mandate of training and supervising their Haitian counterparts, and renovating and building new facilities to provide appropriate places for the detention of prisoners.

The task force is also funding the construction of the Croix-des-Bouquets prison which is scheduled to open in 2011. In fact, I travelled there with the member for Bourassa this year when we were asked to visit the construction site. That institution will become a model institution for the Haitian correctional system in terms of security, hygiene and health, and respect for human rights.

Canada also has a leading role to play in managing the borders by supplying equipment, infrastructure and training. Reform of the justice and security systems is more central than ever to Canada's commitment in Haiti, because it helps create favourable conditions for the reconstruction of the country.

At the New York conference, following on the Montreal conference, all participants, including Canada, agreed on the creation of two mechanisms: the interim Haiti recovery commission and the Haiti reconstruction fund. The aim of those mechanisms is to improve coordination of international assistance while applying best practices in respect to transparency and ensuring that the projects funded reflect the priorities identified by the Haitian government in its action plan.

The interim commission is co-chaired by Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive and the UN special envoy to Haiti, Bill Clinton, and is composed of an equal number of Haitian and foreign representatives.

Canada supports the work of the interim commission and in fact sits on its governing board. Canada is also a member of the Haiti reconstruction fund and has allocated \$31.3 million to that multi-donor fund to finance priority projects approved by the interim commission.

Canada is also working to strengthen trading relations with Haiti and expand collaboration between Canadian and Haitian businesses.

In the present situation in Haiti it is becoming increasingly apparent that the private sector plays an essential role in the long-term prosperity of the country, that it is an essential engine of development and job creation and that it also contributes to reducing the country's dependence on development aid and budget support.

Canada is determined to maintain its long-term commitment and help rebuild the country, its infrastructure and its institutions and develop its humanitarian and human capacities. We are also involved in the fight against cholera, which has been ravaging the Haitian population for several weeks now.

I should point out, as I did this morning when I met with my Mexican and American counterparts, that neither Canada nor the international community, working all together, can solve all of Haiti's problems.

I say frankly to our Haitian friends: it is up to you to elect a democratic, effective, honest government.

●(1905)

That is essential to rebuilding the country.

I would also like to say to them that we respect your sovereignty and we understand your frustration. But I ask you to consider everything that the international community has done for Haiti.

The job is not done. But you must do your part by creating democratic institutions, which your country urgently needs.

*Standing Order 52*

[English]

To support the elections in Haiti, Canada has provided \$5.8 million and is continuously working with the UN and the Organization of American States to call for calm political dialogue and compromise. The Canadian government is in the process of exploring various options. It may have to offer further support to proposals currently under discussion. Of course it is important to remember that as a sovereign country, Haiti is ultimately responsible for its own electoral process, supported by the international community.

We affirmed our collective commitment to the principle of Haitian ownership at the Montreal ministerial conference in March, and we must continue to uphold this principle. While it is up to the people of Haiti to decide who they select as their leaders, the international community remains concerned about the democratic process and principles of good governance.

While Haitians are making crucial choices for their future, they need our support. Both Canada and the international community are monitoring events and encouraging calm to prevail.

The elections, the cholera outbreak and the volatile security situation are all complex and interlinked challenges that threaten to further destabilize an already fragile country still reeling from this year's devastating earthquake. Canada views elections in Haiti as a critical milestone in the country's recovery.

It is the newly elected leaders who will lead the country, with support from the international community, through this next crucial stage of reconstruction and development. It is also the new government with which the international community will work to continue to make progress on reconstruction and rebuilding. For this reason, it is vital that the situation regarding elections in Haiti is resolved in a timely manner.

Haiti cannot afford to languish without a strong and accountable government at this critical time in its history. That said, speed must not trump transparency and accountability. This delicate process must be undertaken in a thorough and inclusive manner, for without public support and buy-in, the credibility of future leadership could be compromised.

•(1910)

[Translation]

Last Friday, I personally shared my concerns with President Préval and Prime Minister Bellerive about the irregularities noted during the first round of voting.

I also appealed to the sense of responsibility of the political players and urged them to maintain calm and continue with the electoral process. In the coming days, we will see whether these people measure up. Their attitude will determine what happens next. The sympathy of the international community depends in large measure on what they do.

For my part, I cannot forget that in addition to the very considerable efforts our government has made, Canadians have raised \$220 million for earthquake victims, in co-operation with the government.

Frankly, I find it disgusting that after a tragedy that cost the lives of more than 250,000 of their fellow Haitians and in the midst of a deadly epidemic, some unscrupulous people can think only of their own personal ambitions.

In these perilous times, the international community must speak with one voice and send a message to the Haitian people.

[English]

The current situation around the elections shows the importance of working on governance in Haiti. Rebuilding infrastructure is pointless if the state remains weak and irresponsible. This includes the ability to manage key institutions and run essential systems. That is why our priority in the coming weeks will be to ensure that the electoral process is brought to a legitimate and democratic conclusion.

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his words. We have many points in common. However, I would not want to talk about disbursements. The government can say it gave a certain amount of money, but this may not have arrived yet, and so forth. Apart from that, we should focus our efforts on helping the Haitian people, who are starting to feel they have been had. We are not there to choose one of the candidates but to ensure that the process works. That is why the international community has invested \$30 million, including \$5.6 million from the Government of Canada. But things are happening in Haiti. People are starting to lose confidence in MINUSTAH. They have already lost most of their confidence in the president. Our role is to help establish a decent environment so that a real future government can emerge.

It may be that the recount will not work. If Mr. Martelly, Ms. Manigat and the 12 other candidates, including Jacques-Édouard Alexis and Jean-Henry Céant, do not want a recount, they cannot be forced. We can lead a horse to water but we cannot make it drink. Instead of a second round on January 16, maybe the election could be held all over again with all the candidates, both for the legislature and the presidency. That would probably be the only way to ensure the Haitian people's confidence in their institutions.

•(1915)

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question. He wonders whether I am prepared to agree to a certain option. I would say, quite frankly, that we work in close co-operation with the international community at the Organization of American States and CARICOM and with other partners who are interested in what is happening in Haiti.

As I emphasized in my speech, the international community must speak with one voice and call upon the political players and the government in Haiti to do everything necessary to see the electoral process through to the end. We will not get what we want at this point by suggesting various options. It is important to show respect for Haiti as a sovereign country. When we act, we should ensure that the people who are directly involved in the electoral process are basically doing everything they can to see the process through to the end.

*Standing Order 52*

[English]

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister said that everyone should buy into a solution. That is what we want to see from the international community on the ground in Haiti.

To that point there is a real concern that if we do not see an agreed upon process for the next step in the election process, there will be continued violence. I know that all issues cannot be put on the table tonight, but I would hope that Canada is using its influence working with others in the international community to look at all solutions. One that some have talked about is to get the leaders to agree to some form of interim government to get on with the real concerns that people have with the cholera epidemic and the reconstruction. That would provide some stability first and then there could be talk about elections after.

I am wondering if all of those options are being talked about. I am not asking the minister to tell us exactly what the conversations are, but I just want to know that Canada is involved in these kinds of conversations.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Mr. Speaker, let me respond actively on that question and say yes, we are involved in discussions. I mentioned before my phone conversations with both President Préval as well as Prime Minister Bellerive.

The point that I reiterate time after time when I discuss with Haitian authorities as well as our ambassador in Haiti, and the information I put forward, is that we will not be able to do all of the things that we want to do in terms of reconstruction and addressing in a fulsome manner the medical issues that are taking place today without re-establishing the credibility between the electoral process and the number of candidates, as well as the government and the population. There will not be any economic development in that country unless it has a stable government. That is the message that we have been repeating.

We are working with the Organization of American States, our CARICOM partners, and a myriad of other countries that are equally interested. The message we are sending is that this process needs to be respected. I have spoken about correcting the irregularities, and, of course, that is extremely important in order to get the credibility back, but I fundamentally say that we all need to speak with one voice, which is extremely important, while respecting the sovereignty of that country.

• (1920)

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Speaker, like the minister just said, Haiti is like big, simmering coals right now. Stability is the name of the game, but we have to do better. It is a sovereign country, but because of the violent situation, what are we going to do to help the vulnerable among the population, the children and displaced families?

Because the trust link has been damaged between MINUSTAH and the population, I would like to hear from the minister whether he considered the fact that maybe we should send more Canadian troops there for security since we have a lot of French-speaking soldiers and that would be more helpful. Maybe he could also give a heads-up on DART because given the cholera it may be a good solution if DART goes back to Haiti.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Mr. Speaker, there are a few issues that have been raised by my colleague.

First, let me point to one of the issues in terms of the reconstruction. Obviously things are not moving at the pace with which we are usually accustomed. There are still 1.4 million people who are displaced. They do not have any permanent residence. This is fundamental to reconstruction. One of the problems is the land tenure issue, which has not been resolved, and the only way that can be resolved is through a more stable government.

On cholera and DART, my colleague, the Minister of International Cooperation, two weeks ago was able to enter into an agreement with the Canadian branch of the International Red Cross. We are working in tandem with a number of countries, but, indeed, with that component of the Red Cross we are putting together the health capacity that is needed.

Today I was with Secretary of State Clinton as well as the secretary of foreign affairs from Mexico and we were all talking about the need to ensure that dehydration equipment is provided. The international community is doing what it needs to do to be able to put that forward, but again Haiti needs a stable government, and in order for it to have one we need to respect the electoral process.

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is very concerned about the situation in Haiti. The violence of the last few days is yet another ordeal for the people of Haiti, who have already suffered so much this year. Peace must be restored so that the recount can be as transparent as possible. The Haitian authorities must do everything they can to ensure there is an unblemished democratic process.

The results of the presidential election announced on November 28 were 31% for Ms. Manigat, 22% for Mr. Célestin and 21% for Mr. Martelly. When these results were announced, violence erupted in the streets. The second round is scheduled for January 16, 2011.

As soon as the results were announced, Mr. Martelly's backers began to protest. Their candidate had been expected to reach the second round. His supporters erected barricades in the streets of Port-au-Prince. There were also clashes with UN forces. Mr. Martelly accused the elections commission of plunging the country into a crisis by publishing false results and claimed that they wanted to prevent him from finishing second and advancing to the next round. He called for non-violent demonstrations.

Most observers said the election was marred by widespread irregularities, just as the first round had been badly handled. More than half of the 19 candidates demanded that the result be cancelled. The United States expressed its concern that the result did not reflect the vote count from one end of the country to the other. President Préval appealed for calm and defended the result. I should point out that Mr. Célestin is Mr. Préval's hand-picked successor.

As a result of the violence, the interim electoral council (CEP) announced last Thursday that it would initiate a special process to review the ballots in the counting centres. In short, there will be a recount. This will be done by a joint commission consisting of the CEP, the candidates for the presidency, and national and international observers.

*Standing Order 52*

The political crisis has been deepened by the fact that the first two candidates, Mirlande Manigat and Michel Martelly, have said they will not participate in the process. In view of the circumstances and as a result of the violence, Canada announced last Thursday that it was closing its embassy in Port-au-Prince for an indefinite period.

In light of this, Canada must help Haiti ensure that its presidential election procedures are clear and transparent. Haitians have a right to have a democratically elected president with a mandate from the people to address the major challenges facing their country. Canada must also tell the Haitian government that it is prepared to help with any requests for human and material resources to properly carry out the election.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs shared the reaction of the Canadian government and his serious concerns regarding the democratic situation in Haiti. His government's message is that the Canadian government must help Haiti hold a clear and transparent election and that it will do so through multilateral organizations such as the UN, CARICOM and the Organization of American States. He also said that the international community cannot do everything, that it is up to the Haitian government and the Haitian people to ensure that the democratic process prevails and the recount of the initial votes is conducted calmly, transparently and quickly. He also added that Canada has offered to participate in the process as part of a joint commission. Furthermore, the minister declared that there would be no economic progress in Haiti without a stable government.

As he stated previously, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has spoken with President René Préval and his Prime Minister, Jean-Marc Bellerive. He expressed his concerns about the electoral irregularities and encouraged them to do what is necessary to correct them.

However, Canada must not let this political crisis lead it to neglect the other problems in Haiti.

• (1925)

It is worth noting that the earthquake caused considerable damage and that the scope of the reconstruction effort is unprecedented. Keep in mind however that the earthquake exacerbated a situation that existed well before disaster struck. Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world, and its infrastructure is in many respects inadequate.

In 2009, the United Nations Development Program Poverty Index ranked Haiti 97th out of 137 countries. The scope of the reconstruction effort is commensurate with the poverty that existed in Haiti in terms of poor-quality building materials, the lack of a building code, no means of subsistence for a large segment of the population, and so on

The January 12 earthquake caused unparalleled damage: 222,570 people were killed and 300,000 injured; approximately 1.3 million people are still living in temporary shelters in the Port-au-Prince region and 600,000 escaped the disaster-stricken areas and sought refuge in other parts of the country; the capacity of the Haitian government was seriously diminished; it is estimated that approximately 60% of government, administrative, and economic infrastructure was destroyed; one-third of the 60,000 Haitian public servants died during the earthquake; over half of the 8,500 prisoners

in Haiti escaped; 101 United Nations employees lost their lives; the court of justice, the departments of Justice and Public Safety, and the legislature were destroyed; over 105,000 houses were destroyed and more than 208,000 were damaged; 1.5 million people were left without homes; approximately 4,000 Haitian students died; and 1,234 schools were destroyed and 2,500 damaged.

The total damage is estimated at \$7.9 billion: \$4.3 billion in physical infrastructure damage and \$3.5 billion in economic losses, which amounts to 120% of Haitian GNP; 70% of the damage affected the private sector.

The total funding required is \$11.5 billion: 50% for social service sectors, 17% for infrastructure and housing and 15% for the environment and disaster risk management.

The Red Cross is working on providing aid to the Haitian people: 80,000 households have been given temporary housing; 95,000 people have received medical care; and 90,000 cubic meters of water have been distributed to 118 sites.

As a result of the earthquake, the legislative election scheduled for February 2010 had to be delayed, creating a climate of political uncertainty. President Préval wrote to the UN Secretary-General requesting that a study mission be commissioned to review options and potential timetables.

Overall, the situation has remained calm from a security standpoint. There has nevertheless been an increase in the number of sex crimes committed, most of them in camps for displaced persons.

The international community's response in the wake of the earthquake appeared to be commensurate with the seriousness of the disaster. The scope of the reconstruction effort is, however, unparalleled. An independent expert, Michel Forst, who was commissioned by the UN Human Rights Council to write a report on the human rights situation in Haiti, stated that:

The international community's response to the humanitarian crisis was immediate and massive, with a clear determination on the part of all countries to do their best to furnish speedy succour to the people. It was only gradually that the magnitude of the disaster and the numbers of direct and indirect victims were realized. Even though the coordination of the international aid has been criticized, it is too often forgotten that the international community was confronted with an unprecedented situation and had to adapt itself gradually to the country's parameters.

We also need to ensure that the money promised by the donor countries is effectively distributed in Haiti.

• (1930)

Bear in mind that at the last Haiti Donors Conference, which was held in Washington in April 2009, only 30% of the promised funds had been transferred to Haiti.

In terms of Canadian aid, Haiti is second on the list of CIDA's priority countries. In 2006, the Canadian government committed to sending \$555 million in development aid to Haiti from 2006 to 2011. According to CIDA, the six donor and project priorities in Haiti since January 12 are housing, debris removal, response to the natural disaster, education, health and agriculture.



*Standing Order 52*

Since the devastating earthquake on January 12, 2010, the Government of Canada has announced a number of financial contributions to support humanitarian, recovery and reconstruction efforts in Haiti, in collaboration with its partners and the Haitian government. But many of these statements were contradictory. In some cases, it was not new money, but funds that had already been announced.

The Bloc Québécois cannot help but be disappointed and speak out against these repeated announcements of the same funds going into the various measures to aid Haiti. Quebeckers have clearly voiced their desire to assist Haitians in rising up again from this humanitarian crisis. We must not be stingy with our aid. We would have expected a firmer commitment from the Canadian government. It should have released more new money to help the Haitian people, who have already suffered too much.

For example, on July 12, 2010, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Cooperation announced that Canada would be giving Haiti a total of \$1.1 billion. The timetable for that announcement started well before the earthquake, since it covers the period from 2006 to 2012.

This is how the \$1.1 billion is being allocated. There will be \$555 million from 2006 to 2011. In reality, the largest portion was spent before the earthquake, primarily to fund police and prison institutions, and the 2009 elections, which were massively boycotted. There was \$400 million announced on March 31, 2010, and on July 12. It was promised that the funds would be paid out over the coming two years. That money is not needed in two years; it is needed immediately. There is \$150 million for short-term aid following the earthquake. The reality is that the money has been paid out to organs of the UN and NGOs. It is difficult to confirm how much has been spent, and how. There was \$30 to \$45 million to the Haiti Reconstruction Fund, money that is yet to be paid out; and \$40 million for debt relief, a large portion of which dates from the era of the Duvalier dictatorship and had to be paid to international financial institutions. This is not earthquake-related aid.

As well, the federal government announced that it would match the \$220 million donated by Canadians to NGOs during the period from January 12 to February 16, 2010.

On March 31, in New York, CIDA stated that half of the \$220 million, \$110 million, was included in the \$400 million announced, which was part of the \$1.1 billion. In other words, the Canadian government decided that \$110 million in aid to Haiti would therefore not be new money; it would come out of money already announced.

During this time, Haiti was struck by further misfortune: cholera. On October 22, 2010, President René Préval confirmed the nightmare: the severe diarrhea epidemic afflicting the Artibonite region was indeed caused by cholera.

As we all know, cholera is a viral disease that causes vomiting and diarrhea leading to severe dehydration. Cholera can rapidly lead to death, but it can be easily treated with antibiotics and rehydration. The virus is spread by water and food that are contaminated by fecal matter. Since then, the mortality rate has continued to rise.

● (1935)

According to the most recent report, to date, 93,222 Haitians have been affected by cholera and 2,120 have died from the disease. Doctors Without Borders has confirmed that it has treated over 16,500 people, but the magnitude of the challenge is huge.

This epidemic is spreading especially quickly because Haiti has no permanent infrastructure to help control its spread. There are desperate needs. Haiti needs soap, chlorine-treated water, toilets and proper waste disposal facilities. In the current situation, these basic needs are not being met.

In response to the cholera epidemic, aid has been a long time coming. In late November, one month after the beginning of the outbreak, the UN confirmed that it had received only \$5 million of the \$164 million promised by the international community.

This cholera epidemic is also at the root of the recent violence in Haiti. According to a specialist's report published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the source of this epidemic can be traced back to peacekeepers from Nepal. The UN still refutes this assertion. Haitians are therefore blaming UN peacekeepers and the international community in general for this outbreak.

The violence is also preventing humanitarian aid from reaching its destination. According to Oxfam officials, violence has prevented that organization from effectively distributing soap, rehydration salts and clean water. The violence has also hampered public awareness campaigns on proper hygiene practices.

Canada and the international community must do everything they can to fight the cholera epidemic that is devastating that country, which has already suffered so much.

In closing, I would like to quote a few lines that appeared in an article in the *Haiti Press Network*, a few lines that speak volumes.

The week beginning this Monday will be whatever politics allows it to be. If the politicians, candidates, diplomats, leaders and demonstrators so choose, Haiti will experience a normal week...to allow students to write their exams and merchants to get out their Christmas and New Year's decorations.

Ladies and gentlemen, the country needs to breathe in an atmosphere of peace and reconciliation.

● (1940)

[English]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am just amazed at the member's speech in reference to Canada's reconstruction efforts and giving money to Haiti. One minute the member agrees that Haiti is the second-largest recipient of Canadian development assistance, and then she goes on to say that moneys have not been going forward.

What I need to tell the hon. member is that Canada is working with international partners. We have a co-ordinated effort, as was stated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. When we are working with international partners, we are not working in isolation.

The member talked about Canada giving aid to the police officers. Yes, we are out there to build the capacity of the Government of Haiti so that they are effectively able to deal with many of the issues that she has talked about.

*Standing Order 52*

It is important to recognize that, working with the international community, efforts are being made together so that aid can be delivered in the most effective way.

We are at the 10-minute mark, so I will only take a little time out of the member's 20-minute speech, but I want to say this—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. The parliamentary secretary has the floor to ask a question. He will be given the usual amount of time to do that.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Speaker, I will just finish. I do respect your decision.

The point I am trying to make here is that, effectively, over \$1 billion has been given to Haiti, with \$7 million being given to fight cholera. We are working with the international community to ensure that there is effective delivery of aid to Haiti to work on all the issues the member is talking about.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Mr. Speaker, I understand this anger. I may have touched a nerve and upset the hon. Conservative member a bit.

I would nonetheless like to remind him of the numbers I mentioned in my speech. There is currently a cholera crisis and the number of deaths increase every day. In response to this epidemic, we are told that aid is trickling in and the UN says it has received only \$5 million of the \$164 million promised by the international community over a year ago.

In a few days we will be marking this sad anniversary, a tragedy that affected an entire people, an earthquake. Money was promised a year ago and we are reaffirming our commitment to support the Haitian people, but the money is not getting there.

On March 31, 2010, and in July 2010, the government promised it would provide \$400 million over the next two years. The money is not needed two years from now; it is needed right now, primarily to eradicate the cholera. It is all well and fine to install and train police officers and build prisons, but we have to think about feeding, caring for and housing these people.

•(1945)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member from the Bloc Québécois.

There is a great deal of discussion about the election results, but the debate here is not enough to resolve the situation, particularly the role of the community on the ground in planning the reconstruction of Haiti.

Is Canada providing enough support to Haitian civil society?

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate my colleague's question, but I would have preferred that it be clearer. Perhaps I would have better understood the gist of his question. I believe it has to do with how the government can conduct the elections underway in Haiti in a democratic process.

As I mentioned, Haitians are entitled to have a democratically elected president, one who would be mandated by the people to address the major challenges faced by Haiti.

The country's situation since the January earthquake has exacerbated the needs of the people who are waiting for humanitarian aid and health care. People are still living in makeshift camps. The conditions are such that, on the eve of the election, the people are worn out and tired; they want tangible results. All they are asking for is a bit of peace and prosperity.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Outremont.

Why are we here tonight? To start with, we are here to discuss Canada's role in Haiti after the devastating earthquake that reduced much of its capital, Port-au-Prince, to rubble and displaced many Haitians. To give members an idea, this was the worst earthquake in the region in more than 200 years. The estimated total cost of the disaster was between \$7.2 billion and \$13.2 billion, based on a death toll of anywhere from 200,000 to 250,000 people. In fact, there have been numbers later revised up to 300,000 people. Crushed buildings from the January earthquake still spill out onto the sidewalks. There is a cholera epidemic that has killed more than 1,000 people and stoked violent demonstrations against peacekeepers, and now, on top of all that, an election process that has thrown the country into even further destabilization.

[*Translation*]

Canadians promised to provide long-term assistance to the Haitian people. Canadians gave generously in order to help the country get back on its feet quickly. The aftermath of the earthquake is now being exacerbated by a cholera epidemic and a questionable electoral process. After the elections, there is the risk of an even greater destabilization of Haiti.

•(1950)

[*English*]

There are three parts to this problem. In the short term, we need to save the lives of those who are threatened by cholera. In the medium term, we need to help rebuild basic infrastructure in Haiti. In the long term, we need to focus on rebuilding and strengthening democratic institutions in Haiti with Haitians and not by others.

What does that mean to the current post-election crisis? Canada should engage the political leadership of Haiti to work toward common goals and to stabilize the political situation in Haiti so that the basic fundamental needs of Haitians can be met immediately.

The cholera crisis is horrific. According to the United Nations, 400,000 people might catch it over the next year.

[*Translation*]

According to Canadian organizations on the ground, the most immediate needs are as follows: a good campaign to educate the people and prevent contagion; the prompt distribution of water purification tablets and soap; the establishment of cholera treatment centres and the training of those who work in them; and safe and respectful transportation of the dead and the holding of suitable funerals.

[*English*]

In the medium term, we need to help Haiti rebuild its basic infrastructure.

*Standing Order 52*

[*Translation*]

In the medium term, we must get on with the construction of housing for the 1.6 million displaced Haitians living in precarious conditions in the camps. It is important that a drinking water system be established.

In the long term, we must focus on the institutions of the country and, above all, on civil society, justice and the participation of women. Never again must the democratic ambitions of Haitians be held back by an electoral process that limits participation and allows abuse to run rampant.

[*English*]

In the long term, we should help rebuild and strengthen Haiti's democratic institutions. No longer should Haitians' democratic ambitions be dampened by an electoral process that limits participation and is open to abuse.

We made a commitment to Haiti, not just after last year's earthquake but before that. What we need to be seized with right now is to ensure the aid and the support that we provide to Haiti is not done to them but is done with them in the spirit of solidarity. What is of concern to many is that for Haitians right now, what they see is a crisis of cholera, an election that is not accepted by many and a world community that seems to be unsure of what to do next.

It is clear what we must do. We must be with the Haitians. We must be absolutely certain that their priorities are met immediately. If this is just about gamesmanship, if this is just about trying to put our guy in power, then it will fail miserably.

I will urge the government, as will many in our party, to be vigilant as to what our goal is in Haiti. It is to support the people, and we must engage our diaspora community to do that. We have an untapped resource with people of the diaspora community in Montreal, Ottawa and throughout the country. They are clear about what they want to see. They want to see Canada take a leadership role to provide the stability that is necessary so we can get on with the work, in the short term, of saving lives; in the medium term, of helping rebuild the critical infrastructure that is required, not only from the earthquake but before that; and, in the long term, that we focus our energies and our support on rebuilding civil society so that it will be a country that will be able to have a democratic election, that will no longer be open to abuse, that will have important institutions and that will be able to withstand the conflicts that can occur.

Those are the things that we need to see. We hope our government is playing a leadership role and that it is doing what we have done best in Canada, which is playing an honest broker role to find the pathway to solutions. If Canada seizes that opportunity, not only will it have the full support of our party but I am sure of all Canadians. Most important, if we are able to provide that time-honoured Canadian value of finding that pathway, then we will have the support and the welcome of the Haitian people.

• (1955)

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am a little disturbed by the NDP member's intervention, specifically on two main issues.

First, he said that the international community did not know where it was going. I would like to tell him that we actually do know where we are going. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, including the international affairs committee, are working toward ensuring that the aid is best utilized in Haiti.

Second, he talked about something that was even more disturbing. He wanted to know whether this was gamesmanship or whether we would put "our guy in power". What does he mean by "our guy in power"? What guy is he talking about?

We are talking about a fair and democratic election, if he had listened to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Who is "our guy in power" that he is talking about?

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that the parliamentary secretary was listening carefully. I said that I hoped that was not the case. He should listen to his minister because the minister was concerned about the outcome of the election and he was fairly up front about his concerns about electoral fraud.

I am not sure what the parliamentary secretary was listening to but I will be clear. What we want to see is Canada being a partner with the Haitian people. What we have seen in the past when it comes to Haiti is that governments, and not necessarily just Canadian governments but governments internationally back in the history of France and the United States, have used Haiti.

Members know the history. This is a country that threw off the shackles of slavery. It is fiercely independent. It does not need to be told how to run its affairs. It needs no lessons from us. What it needs is partnership and solidarity. That was my point and that is my point for the parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Ottawa Centre for his speech. We are on the same side, which is important.

Canada and Haiti do not have any historic differences. Not only is Canada a full partner, but the Government of Quebec is as well, given that Haiti and Quebec have French in common through la Francophonie. Clearly, we are working with them. We agree with the diagnosis: we must save lives. Unfortunately, more deaths have occurred as a result of the violence and instability.

I would like us to look at possible solutions to this problem together, since that is the purpose of this debate. I believe that the Canadian military left Haiti too soon. The DART should have remained in Haiti longer. Should we send the DART back to Haiti? Does he think that additional soldiers should be sent to help resolve the safety issues and bring about the desired peace? What does he propose we do to help resolve the current election problem? Should we get involved? Should the election be done over? What does he want to do?

*Standing Order 52*

[English]

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister was along this line. With respect to the elections, it is very important for Canada to be absolutely engaged in what the potential solutions are, everything from having a full runoff to looking at an interim proposal of a unity government. However, that of course must come from the Haitians. We can only try to coordinate it and support it.

On the DART and the military, I am not as sold on them as my colleague is. After the earthquake, there was a role for them. What I am hearing from the NGOs on the ground is that they require resources that can get pushed throughout the country and that the DART may not be the best value for money. With regard to more military, I would like to see political solutions to stabilize things on the ground and I am not sure we need to add more troops to that equation at this time.

● (2000)

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank my friend and colleague from Ottawa Centre who shared his time with me during this very important debate.

I would like to congratulate the member for Bourassa. Although we are from different political parties, some subjects transcend the normal partisanship in the House and the situation in Haiti is one of them. With the hon. member for Bourassa and the hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber, who came up with the idea, we have a committee made up of Canadian parliamentarians who are trying to begin to ensure that Canada's action on this issue is as relevant and meaningful as possible.

That is why I am a bit confused by the off-putting and even aggressive tone we are hearing from the government side. This is very inappropriate for an emergency debate centred on finding solutions. We are not here to use that sort of tone. The Haitian people, courageous and proud people, have already experienced enough tragedy this year. Now is the time to engage in sober reflection and to begin to find solutions that will be beneficial in the long term.

My colleague clearly summarized the issue: our current number one priority must be to continue to save lives. It does not make any sense. We are in the most economically developed part of the world. We live in the western hemisphere, what we call North and South America and western Europe. Nevertheless, in one country, hundreds of thousands of people are at risk of catching a disease that we thought had been relegated to the pages of history books: cholera. A number of people have already died from this disease. I know that Canada is doing its part. The government responded quickly and made sure that the public knew what it was doing. It proposed a fairly large fund in order to match any donations made by the public. This was an excellent way to go about it. But where are we now, almost a year later? That is the question we need to be asking ourselves.

The elections have been much talked about. Let us take a hard look at the facts. We can talk about building democratic institutions, but if we are in Haiti to try to find a solution, then holding the elections in relative calm to ensure reliable results should have been

a priority. That does not seem to have been the case, though. It is all well and good for the minister to say that he might not allow the result if something is found to have happened. Clearly, from what we have seen, heard and read, there were major problems with the election. But we need to remember that Haiti was the first country to free itself from slavery, so the last thing we want to do is treat Haiti like a colony.

Haiti is and always will be free to make its own choices, even though we are all trying to help as best we can. Like everyone, I deplore the fact that the election results are ambiguous. At least, we cannot know whether the announcement that was made is accurate. But let us be clear: it is not up to Canada to decide for Haiti. The time for Canada to act was before the election, not after. We should have said we had resources, we would provide others as well, and we would bring in people who could organize and structure an election process that was as probative and reliable as possible. The thing to do is not to take action after the fact. In a way, what we are doing is blaming the victims, which is not the best approach. Even though Canada has done many very good things from the outset, this was not our finest hour. The minister launched an all-out attack on the ambiguous outcome, but that ambiguity is largely the fault of the government, which did not do enough with the other allies there.

We must also start to rebuild. We must work with the civil society. Although I applaud the fact that the government created a fund to match public contributions, the public still needs objective information on the NGOs and groups that are transferring all of that money to Haiti.

● (2005)

Last year, I was disturbed to see some groups make official claims that people could come to them and trust them with respect to Haiti. They said that the money contributed would help Haiti but also other good causes in the world. I absolutely want them to support other causes, but the people who want to specifically help Haiti must have adequate information on the charities and NGOs that are managing all of this money to get through a crisis that is unique in the history of this part of the world.

In the long term, we must help Haiti build its capacity in terms of infrastructure and governance. When I talk about infrastructure in a country that has experienced so many natural disasters in recent years, such as flooding and the earthquake that is the main issue today, we understand that general healthiness, something we have taken for granted for centuries, is not guaranteed there. Furthermore, hundreds of thousands of people still live in makeshift camps and are still dealing with terrible weather conditions.

*Standing Order 52*

Clearly, Canada can continue to do its part. Earlier, my colleague from Bourassa mentioned that a specific part of the armed forces may have left too soon. In any event, there are certainly solutions, and this might be the time to advocate for our priorities. They are wondering if the election is a priority. Perhaps they should have had the resources in place to avoid ambiguity and the current dispute. If soldiers and military personnel are being sent to a place like Haiti, it means that it is considered to be a priority relative to other activities.

That is unfortunate. In the House, we decided to pull our soldiers out of Afghanistan in 2011. We would have liked that to have happened earlier. However, when the 2011 deadline was set, it was known that troops would be leaving Afghanistan at that time. Instead of having these men and women at our disposal to do this work in Haiti, thousands of them will still be in Afghanistan in the years ahead. That demonstrates how the government makes its choices and sets its priorities.

The New Democratic Party feels that civil society has made the necessary effort. In Montreal, teams of men and women were trained by health and social service centres in the greater metropolitan area to ensure respect for the specific cultural context of those arriving, many of them in an advanced state of distress. Teams of psychologists greeted them at the airport, sometimes at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. The public responded, and Canadians expressed a heartfelt desire to help their Haitian brothers and sisters. It is a top priority for all of us.

Now we need to keep our promises. We have to set our priorities and continue to help.

[*English*]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Bourassa on many occasions talked about sending DART to Haiti. The NDP is not yet sure whether DART is the answer.

I would like to remind both members that the Minister of International Cooperation had announced about two or three weeks ago a new initiative where Red Cross NGOs would get enough funding to prepare a medical team that could be used for emergencies like the cholera emergency in Haiti. This new Government of Canada initiative would work toward addressing the concerns of the member.

I hope he supports the initiative as this is the NGO he talked about, and it has the expertise. The Red Cross could go to Haiti, or any other disaster area that required medical assistance, not reconstruction assistance, which is what this would be for. I hope we have the member's support for that.

● (2010)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Speaker, certainly the International Committee of the Red Cross is part of the solution. There is no doubt about that; they are welcome. In fact, it was one of the groups that was at the forefront when the crisis began. We know that historically, the Red Cross is always there when serious problems arise on the international scene and in natural disasters such as an earthquake, a tsunami, and so on.

Whether it be the Disaster Assistance Response Team, DART, a specialized team we have already withdrawn, or another form of aid from Canada, if my colleague is talking about what happened a few weeks ago, part of the crisis we are talking about today, that is that a few weeks ago what was wanted was for the International Committee of the Red Cross to do more work and for it to be our partner NGO, Canada was already there. Yes, there is the humanitarian crisis and the cholera epidemic, but the emphasis should have been put on organizing a clean and credible election and making that a priority. Not casting stones later, as the government side is doing today.

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I also find it unfortunate that the parliamentary secretary is altering the tone a little. In the beginning, things were going well. We are not here to say that things are coming along and a solution has been proposed; rather, we are here to ask what we can do immediately to resolve the situation. One of the problems is the ongoing sanitation crisis in Haiti. There are open latrines. That is a fact. Basic needs are not even being met. In addition, there is an atmosphere of violence.

I asked the member from Ottawa Centre about this, and now perhaps the member for Outremont could tell us about his own solutions. We have a decision to make now to stabilize the situation. At the moment, MINUSTAH is having problems. We have to help the NGOs do their job.

In concrete terms, how would he guarantee security so the NGOs can do their job?

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Speaker, the very first priority is health. The description given by the member for Bourassa echoes what we hear when we meet with the groups: that they are not able to handle basic sanitation issues. That has to be the first priority. It goes hand in hand with the question of security. If people feel they are in that vulnerable a situation, they may have nothing left to lose, and that affects the situation.

As well, by giving priority to organizing a proper first election round whose results everyone could have accepted, the violence of recent days could perhaps have been avoided. However, that has been added to everything else, because it was not made a priority and nobody got organized to set a different timetable. That is a problem that Canada contributed to by failing to prioritize what it should have prioritized.

I want to stress one point. Whether it be DART or something else, there are very high calibre people in our military, but if our priority is to be in a combat mission in Afghanistan, there will not be enough people physically left to do the rest of the work in the case of crises like in Haiti.

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is very concerned about the recent events taking place in Haiti, the most impoverished country in the Americas even before this past January. Our thoughts continue to be with the people of Haiti as they struggle with each destabilizing event that they face.

*Standing Order 52*

The Government of Canada and the people of Canada remain committed to helping the Haitian people as they rebuild their lives after the earthquake and are now fighting the cholera epidemic, and peaceful political dialogue is essential for Haiti to emerge from the current political crisis. Canada calls on all individuals involved in the Haiti electoral process to prioritize peace and the best interests of the population. Allow me to bring the House up to date on our development work in Haiti.

First, since the terrible earthquake, Canada has responded swiftly and effectively with immediate humanitarian assistance including food aid for 4.4 million people and emergency housing and supplies for 2.2 million people. Since then, we have responded to the critical needs caused by the cholera epidemic. While the recent political unrest has caused some disruption in providing medical care to those affected, the rate of infection is finally slowing.

On December 2, the Pan American Health Organization said that in-hospital case fatality rates have dropped from 9% at the beginning of the outbreak to 3.2% now. We must continue to work to stabilize the spread of disease and prevent further deaths.

With 11 months having passed since the earthquake, we can say that progress is being made in Haiti; however, the process of rebuilding will be slow. The pace of reconstruction left many more vulnerable to the onset of cholera. Medical experts estimate that Haiti will have approximately 400,000 cases of cholera over the next year, with 200,000 cases occurring over the next three months.

Northern Haiti remains the area with the highest caseload. Hastened by inadequate sanitary conditions in many parts of Haiti after the earthquake, the devastating progress of the disease grew worse because of the heavy rains brought on by Hurricane Tomas. Now in addition, civil unrest in the north since November 15 has unfortunately slowed some activities in response to the outbreak. I cannot emphasize strongly enough that the situation in Haiti remains very serious. Canada is working with all who are on the ground in Haiti to respond to these multiple challenges.

Before I give some examples of what Canada is helping to achieve, I would like to inform the Speaker that I am splitting my time with the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

The Canadian International Development Agency is working with five experienced partners in response to the UN appeal for assistance. These partners are the Pan American Health Organization or PAHO, UNICEF, World Vision Canada, Médecins du Monde Canada and Oxfam Canada. They are working together to ensure that Haitians benefit from coordinated, effective and proven interventions that get to the people who need it.

There are currently some 70 organizations coordinated through the UN-led health cluster responding to the epidemic. PAHO is overseeing the coordination, establishing cholera treatment centres, providing technical assistance to help authorities and implementing disease surveillance. UNICEF is coordinating the national water and sanitation response and material and logistical support for the treatment centres, training national health care workers, providing sanitation services for schools in residential child care facilities, as well as implementing a national information campaign on cholera prevention measures.

Oxfam-Québec is providing emergency water and sanitation service for health facilities and affected communities. With the Government of Canada's support, World Vision Canada will provide up to 120,000 cholera patients with life-saving treatment in specialized health facilities and provide additional families with access to clean water and the necessary supplies to slow the spread of cholera in Port-au-Prince, La Gonave and along the border with the Dominican Republic.

● (2015)

Médecins du Monde Canada will establish rehydration and cholera treatment centres in Cité Soleil. It will also provide further training on cholera treatment and prevention measures to community-based and hospital health workers. CIDA is also working with partners on the ground previously funded for earthquake relief to respond to the cholera epidemic.

I am pleased that, after our request, the Canadian Red Cross has deployed part of its newly-created emergency field hospital, created with CIDA's support, to Haiti. The treatment centre is now up and running in Port-au-Prince with Canadian health professionals.

As the first of its kind in the Americas, it is already providing a timely response to urgent needs. Services are being provided through cholera treatment centres, treatment units and oral rehydration centres. Individual and community-based prevention measures such as the distribution of soap, water purification tablets and rehydration salts are ongoing. Tens of thousands of litres of chlorinated water are being sent to affected areas.

I remind the House that Haiti was the poorest country in the Americas prior to the earthquake. When the earthquake hit, it was devastating; 26 out of 28 government department buildings were destroyed, thousands of people lost their homes and livelihoods, children lost their schools, medical facilities were lost as well as basic services and infrastructure, and roads were not passable. The poorest situations existed before the earthquake and then came the cholera epidemic.

The cholera epidemic is now being fought by all NGOs that are there currently working on the earthquake as well as the cholera epidemic. There is a capacity problem. There is again a problem with the destruction of infrastructure and facilities and a medical system that is virtually all being provided by the international community. Canada continues to work within the model set out internationally and agreed to by the government of Haiti, a sovereign country.

I can assure everyone that the Government of Canada continues to monitor the situation very closely to help ensure that the needs are being met even under these most difficult circumstances.

*Standing Order 52*

• (2020)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to believe the minister, and I do not have a problem with her statistics. The problem is that I am still receiving calls from Port-au-Prince, and it seems that the actual situation on the ground is not entirely consistent with what we want to be happening. This is one of the major problems.

I have been told, for example, that in Port-au-Prince, only representatives from Doctors Without Borders have vehicles because the others cannot not leave their homes as a result of the violence. I was also told that two UN helicopters had brought 3,000 tons of medication to two regions of the country but that there are still major problems.

My questions are for the minister. There are many things that we would like to do, but how can she be sure that these things are actually going to be done on the ground? How can we, as Canadians, help with the significant health crisis currently being experienced in Haiti? Does she think that her point of view is a bit optimistic and perhaps not entirely realistic? How does she conduct her checks and balances?

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question because I share his concerns.

This is why we receive daily reports. We receive reports not only from our mission in Haiti but also from the partners with whom we are working.

To describe the challenge, when I asked the Canadian Red Cross, in a new field hospital, to send a unit there to help with the treatment of cholera, they had to send someone. The very next day two people were sent down to talk to the Government of Haiti as to the best place to have it located. They had to work with the local community.

We know some of the challenges. Cholera is new to this population, so they are unaware of the disease itself. Time has to be spent in the communities explaining that there is going to be a treatment centre. In some of the more remote areas, they believe that bringing in a treatment centre means bringing cholera to the community. This does take time.

Transportation has to be arranged. The field unit is now being manned by Canadian professionals who responded to the call. Each of the 170 treatment centres that are in Haiti now had to go through the same process.

We are receiving reports as to how much medicine and how many clients they are seeing every day. We are hopeful that the statistics coming out will show that we may be slowing the progress down, and hopefully we will be able to stabilize very shortly.

Unfortunately, the member is quite right; the ability of our workers and the workers of the various organizations who are on the ground to provide care requires safety. We would not be able to provide any medical care unless we could assure the safety of the people who are there to offer that help.

Consequently we have groups working on safety logistics, infrastructure, health, treatment, and all of this is being coordinated to the best of our abilities. We are calling for peace. We are calling for stability.

We are very concerned that if we do not manage the cholera epidemic, things will only get—

• (2025)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. Questions and comments. The hon. member for Bourassa, a short question please.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to have the minister's point of view on the report from the doctor in France regarding the sources of cholera.

Does the minister believe it is accurate? What is Canada's position on that report?

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Speaker, there was speculation early on when the cholera outbreak struck.

We were getting reports from the United Nations and from the World Health Organization, PAHO. We have just recently read a report saying it is coming from South Asia. By identifying the strain, they are better able to provide the needed treatment.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be taking part in this important debate about Canada's commitment in Haiti and to discuss strengthening its institutions.

In 2006, I had the unforgettable opportunity to act as a short-term observer in Port-au-Prince during the parliamentary election. Seeing such a poor country was culture shock for me. Following the earthquake on January 12, the international community was quick to respond to the Haitian people's immediate needs. The Montreal conference last January demonstrated that the international community and Haitian government acknowledged the mistakes of the past and wanted to start fresh.

The adoption of the Montreal principles confirmed this desire to take a different approach to building a new Haiti. The action plan presented by the Haitian government at the New York conference in March was another step in this direction, as it identified the priorities for rebuilding Haiti.

The Haitian people often express their lack of trust in Haitian authorities. This displeasure is due to the government's inability to provide basic services, chronic political instability and the authorities' inability to fight corruption. There is also the issue of brain drain. In fact, the government struggles to keep university graduates in the public service because of more attractive opportunities with international organizations in Haiti or abroad.

The earthquake only exacerbated the situation. In fact, nearly 30% of the public service was killed and 40% of the country's infrastructure was destroyed, including many government buildings.

*Standing Order 52*

In a situation such as that in Haiti currently, international aid is quite often given directly to NGOs rather than to the government, which hinders the Haitian government's ability to develop its capacities and carry out its responsibilities towards its people. We need to reverse this trend.

The democratic process is also the key to restoring public confidence in Haitian institutions. That is why the current elections in the country represent a significant milestone for Canada. The new government will be leading the country through the next critical phase. That is why it is so important for Canada that the Haitian political players take their responsibilities and make a firm commitment toward democratic principles, namely respect for the integrity of the electoral process.

Eleven months after the earthquake, justice and security system reform are the core of Canada's commitment. We are the top donors to Haiti's correctional system reform. The Department of Foreign Affairs, through the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force, has allocated \$51 million for projects in support of security system reform in Haiti since 2006. The average annual allocation of \$15 million has been increased to \$25 million for 2010-11.

Despite these investments, major gaps remain. The capacity of the Haitian national police force was reinforced, but it still depends largely on support from MINUSTAH. The legal system also has major shortcomings. Many unwarranted preventive detention cases are being filed because of a lack of infrastructure, material resources and qualified staff.

The deployment of up to 150 Canadian police officers to MINUSTAH and the renovation and construction of new institutions to provide adequate detention space for prisoners are among the measures Canada has taken to improve the situation.

Canada also plays a leading role in border control by providing equipment, infrastructure and training.

Canada also supports various work and training initiatives for people wanting to take part in the reconstruction.

• (2030)

These initiatives also serve to strengthen co-operation among the community, the Haitian national police and MINUSTAH.

Haiti has always been vulnerable to natural disasters and epidemics, a situation that has been exacerbated by the government's inability to provide the public with basic services. Haitian social services are the most privatized in the Americas. Over 80% of basic services, particularly education and health services, are provided through NGOs and the private sector. The current cholera epidemic demonstrates the importance of implementing a health care system that is able to meet the public's basic needs.

It is encouraging to note that, during the current crisis, the department of public health and population has been able to demonstrate a certain amount of leadership, within its jurisdiction, in coordinating the response to the crisis. However, the Government of Canada is still deeply concerned by the continuing spread of cholera in Haiti. The number of people affected by this epidemic once again demonstrates the importance of international support.

The Government of Canada reacted quickly by contributing \$7 million to organizations on the ground. This makes Canada one of the leading donor countries in the fight against cholera in Haiti. We will continue to maintain contact with Haitian government officials and humanitarian partners working in Haiti.

In conclusion, with regard to Haiti's future, it is important to reconcile the pressure to obtain quick results with the need to strengthen the capacities of the Haitian state. Although it is important to achieve quick results in some sectors, strengthening Haiti's institutions will be a difficult process that is bound to take time. Canada will monitor the situation closely to ensure that these two aspects remain on the agenda.

I would like to wish Canadian observers the best of luck during these violent times in both the short and long terms.

[*English*]

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Haiti is particularly at risk for cholera because many people have low immunity. For example, children live with malnutrition and people live with HIV-AIDS. The national prevalence of acute malnutrition was 4.5% in 2000 and 9.1% in 2005. Haiti is also affected by a generalized HIV epidemic with 120,000 currently living with the virus.

I wonder if the member could tell us what an emergency response would look like with a minimum package of HIV prevention treatment and care services.

• (2035)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** My apologies to the parliamentary secretary. I had said resuming debate, but the hon. member had left the chamber.

Perhaps the hon. member could succinctly re-put her question to the hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I said that Haiti is particularly at risk for cholera because many people have low immunity. For example, children live with malnutrition and people live with HIV-AIDS. The national prevalence of acute malnutrition was 4.5% in 2000 and 9.1% in 2005. Haiti is also affected by a generalized HIV epidemic with 120,000 currently living with the virus. This is important when we are talking about cholera.

I wonder what she thinks an emergency response would look like, a minimum package, so to speak, of HIV prevention treatment and care services.



*Standing Order 52*

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Speaker, Haiti has been vulnerable to natural disasters and epidemics for a very long time. This situation came to a head with last January's earthquake. We continue to work with NGOs and health services. The Department of Foreign Affairs and CIDA continue to work with contacts on the ground and with governments. It is crucial to find a way to minimize the epidemic in Haiti. We will help Haiti through this epidemic by working together with NGOs and governments and by finding the best way to direct aid.

[*English*]

**Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

I wanted to thank the minister, before we even get started here. As all of these things have been going on with Haiti, she has been keeping me updated, which I know she has with others as well. That is a very good situation and I appreciate that kind of co-operation. It also is a difficult situation, because we get to realize just how serious the implications are for Haiti and what is going on.

I have a few things that I would like to speak of specifically concerning an idea, or suggestions, that might help us with the Haiti situation.

I am very much aware that when the tsunami struck in 2005, at a similar time of year, there were a lot of lessons to be learned from that, but it was half a world away. It was very difficult and I am not sure we learned them very well. When the Haiti situation happened this last January, there was a belief that we would get this one right, in part because it was on our doorstep, in part because it was a country of focus. From our initial reaction to what happened after the earthquake and others, it seemed to be moving along that line, but it was not so much to do with any one particular country.

I remember being in New York at the United Nations with the minister. Bill Clinton was there and he was supposedly helping to direct a coordinated response worldwide for this. I remember talking to a number of Haitians at that conference, especially civil society leaders, who realized that to a certain degree they were being included, but their worry was that although everybody was talking about a 10-year process in which these people could be helped, really the focus was being put on the short-term relief.

They were having great difficulty in trying to get in to discuss how the problems Haiti is facing now are the problems that it has always faced. They were not looking to be popularized and beatified and told what wonderful people they were. They realize they have their own problems, but they also realize that long-term development is actually what is going to make it work.

As well, part of what my concern is, and many of us who follow the environmental file know this, is that this will not be the last thing that confronts Haiti. We know that these things, if the scientists are correct, likely will increasingly begin to snowball in places like Haiti and therefore just as we are recovering from one thing, we will get hit with another. That is what has been happening in the course of these last few months, making it very difficult for Canada or any other government to know how to respond.

The anniversary is coming up in January. I was in Sudan when it happened but I remember I came back and people were very much moved and wanted to do something. Since that time, there has been some confusion. With the anniversary coming up, a lot of emphasis is going to be placed upon that confusion, and I do not mean just about the matched money that was supposed to happen. I do think people are confused there and would sure appreciate clarification, but internationally, we still have not developed a system that is capable of responding to this situation, Bill Clinton aside. Let us face it, if this would have happened in Togo or someplace like that, it would not have had nearly the interest that Haiti did. We have to be prepared for other disasters in other parts of the world.

Regarding CIDA especially, part of the problem we have with CIDA is twofold: emergency relief and long-term development. These things are very difficult and all of a sudden, as we are moving along in development, a disaster happens such as Haiti and we have to take away so many of our resources in order to focus on that. I remember the first time the minister gave me a briefing, it was shortly after it happened. She was exhausted and she was just trying to keep up with both sides of CIDA to keep it going.

I would like to suggest something more along the lines of the British model. I know that in Canada we have a group called The Humanitarian Coalition, made up of four major NGOs, that has been trying for some time to develop a coordinated response among NGOs for both long-term development and especially toward international relief.

In Britain, 35 years ago, a whole bunch of these groups all came together, along with the British government, and decided that probably the best thing that it could do to help its international development program within government was to bring a bunch of the NGOs together and hold a competition of 16 of the main ones, all with different skills, some in health, some in water, some in building, those kinds of things.

These groups would come together and then they would work all year long, and they did not just work among themselves. They worked with the media, so the BBC was a huge part of it, three different channels of the BBC. Newspapers and others were part of it. They brought universities inside. They brought the private sector inside, and for 35 years that system has run, and when a disaster happens, these people have already been prepared.

● (2040)

When the crisis in Haiti first happened, there were 10,000 NGOs in Haiti within the first month. I realize that a lot of those were Haitian NGOs, but the point is that it was a nightmare to try to coordinate all those groups.

*Standing Order 52*

I wonder whether it would not be a good idea for CIDA and the Department of Foreign Affairs to consider building on the British model. The British are all ready with humanitarian relief. They know they are going to get so much money from the government, though it depends somewhat on the nature of the emergency. These people meet on an ongoing basis. Having been in London, England, I know free pamphlets can be picked up on bookshelves. The pamphlets give a 1-800 number to call if someone wants to donate. These pamphlets tell how that donation will be matched. It is all done in advance and they are very much ready when these emergencies happen. What they have really stressed is the coordination of information for the average citizen.

I think we have had some problems in that regard with respect to the situation in Haiti. It is not just a Canadian problem. It is an American problem and it is a problem for other countries as well, because it is such a nightmare to handle.

The British version of the humanitarian coalition constantly communicates with people the difference between relief and development. We are caught between these two things with respect to Haiti. We know that we have to get on with development and we have to start building infrastructure and other things, but then along comes flooding and then along comes cholera and it gets very difficult to do it. The NGOs are expressing confusion themselves about what to do.

I do not mean this to sound too negative, but often NGOs will chase after where the funding goes. I do not doubt that it is an important and necessary thing to do, but in the British system of humanitarian coalition, it works out the funding well in advance so that this kind of competition is not happening when the money is suddenly made available from the government. Not everybody is rushing in and trying to dominate the situation.

The best NGOs are meant to come forward and say why they deserve to be part of this NGO coalition for emergency relief and development. That particular group has a relationship with DFID, the British version of CIDA. The relationship is ongoing, with monthly meetings being held. They are doing something now that is going to expand that even further and I think it is something that Canada needs to look at.

We are not like Britain. We are a broad country in terms of our ability to put together information mechanisms and empowerment mechanisms for average citizens such that if they give money towards a certain group and it is supposed to be matched, they are not left waiting and wondering whether it has been done or not. These things are worked out in advance in Britain.

I would like to tell the minister and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs that there is nothing wrong in looking at the British type of system for Canada so that if something is happening in Haiti, it will not stop other things from happening.

This group is constantly working on it and coordinating it. They make sure that people have the 1-800 number so that, as soon as something happens, a person just has to phone that number and the humanitarian coalition in Britain will sort out where the funding goes on the basis of need as determined by the government and international organizations.

Personally, I think it is a better system than what we have at present. We have just cobbled together what we have had over the last number of years. The tsunami was a big lesson to the Liberals, and Haiti is a big lesson to all of us that something more coordinated needs to happen.

At this intersection between emergency relief and development, it is very important that we find a group of NGOs who can work in harmony with CIDA, who can sit down and work for that intersection, who would know what needs to be done in Haiti because they have already studied it. We know it is going to happen again in Haiti. The British have studied it and have the disciplines in the various sectors, and as soon as a disaster happens, the BBC and the others all get the information out there. People know what number to call, and immediately the government and the coalition get back with the information that people are looking for. It is not a perfect system, but I think it is better than what we have.

What I am trying to put forward here, and I appreciate the opportunity, is that Haiti has been bigger than all of us. It has swallowed all of us up because it is such a complex problem. We ought to get some people on it who are more full time and would be willing to lead us in that direction. I would encourage the government to consider this suggestion.

• (2045)

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member across the floor for the suggestion and also for working with us to ensure that those people, in many countries, are being helped the best we can as Canadians.

I also appreciate the fact that he recognizes, in situations that are overwhelming for the governments in those countries, that both have to happen. In terms of short-term humanitarian relief, we are supporting the feeding of 400,000 children every day in Haiti, as well as trying to move ahead on reconstruction, respond to the cholera outbreak, and so on.

I know the member is very aware of another major disaster that we are also dealing with, which is the flooding in Pakistan. The United Nations has said that it is, in fact, by its estimation, the biggest humanitarian challenge faced by the United Nations. So things do change.

I also will take note of the member's suggestion. As the member knows, when the government went ahead on maternal and child health, we had a coalition and we worked very closely together. On the suggestion that the member has put forward, the challenge there is to make sure that the international community comes to recognize the presence.

I was just informed that the Canadian Red Cross was invited to the international table in Haiti, as the first NGO to be at the table with the interim commission in making decisions about reconstruction.

We are always looking for ways to improve our work.

*Standing Order 52*

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** I think that is right, Madam Speaker. However, with the humanitarian coalition in Britain, although they keep it at arm's length from DFID, they are still seen with DFID. So it is not just that they are acting independently. The moment that DFID gets involved in a place or something happens such as in Haiti or Pakistan, the international community already recognizes that particular group because of their workings with DFID.

What I would suggest is that I know there is a humanitarian coalition in Canada that is getting up and running; I would really like to see CIDA and the government give its support to help it to get us to the point where we can develop a better reaction immediately.

If that happens and CIDA recognizes that and works with that group, that group would get international recognition because of its work with the Canadian government.

• (2050)

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Following on the member's suggestion that he has talked about, I would like to know how he sees international relief organizations involved in that. When he talks about humanitarian relief in the U.K., he is talking about British NGOs. What about our co-operation with international relief organizations, with which Canada likes to be in a multilateral forum?

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** That is a valid point, Madam Speaker, and I think it is true that in the multilateral forum those things do happen. However, DFID is also working with them to help to co-ordinate those.

This is basically a way to get the citizenry engaged in the particular country in which the group is formed. It is not trying to solve the UN problems and all the coordination that goes along there, but I think we need citizens to be more engaged, because they are giving heavily towards this problem. I just feel that we need a better way of marshalling their forces together and educating them so that they can have more of an impact and feel that they are doing that in the country that they come from.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we are here tonight to talk about the situation in Haiti. Haiti's precarious situation is known the world over.

[*English*]

We can look at some of the headlines that we saw last week.

[*Translation*]

I grabbed what was in the bin. They are English newspapers.

[*English*]

They say, for example, "Haiti on edge..."; "Haiti fears violence in election wake..."; "Haitians take to the streets..."; "The country is on fire...: Haiti virtually shut down yesterday as citizens took to the streets by the thousands to protest...[and] businesses, schools and the airport were closed".

[*Translation*]

However, it is important to North Americans for Haiti to find a solution because of our proximity to that country and because of the

number of Haitians living in Canada and the United States. Canada has always been prepared to answer the call when its friends and allies are in need.

[*English*]

There are literally thousands of Canadians who have family ties to Haiti, and these Canadians want us to live up to our reputation and take decisive action to help steer Haiti out of this crisis that threatens to tear the country apart.

[*Translation*]

These people are my constituents, my neighbours, my friends, and we cannot abandon them.

[*English*]

From the introduction of peacekeeping on the world stage by Lester Pearson to the introduction of the responsibility to protect doctrine in the UN by Paul Martin, Canada has always led when crisis threatened to tear lives apart. We invented peacekeeping and we invented the responsibility to protect doctrine; and since we have such a close relationship with Haiti, strengthened by bonds of family and friendship, Canada must rally the world to come together and lift Haiti out of the mire it is currently stuck in.

Regardless of party affiliation, Canadian governments have always stood for peace, justice, strong moral principles and a vigorous engagement in world affairs. As a Liberal who greatly admires the accomplishments of leaders such as Pearson, Trudeau, Chrétien and Martin, leaders who took the principles of their predecessors and built upon them with new ideas and initiatives, I know that Canada's role in Haiti should be as an unwavering partner who will propose constructive ideas, back up our promises and convince other nations to join us in fighting the good fight.

We need our actions to make a difference. We must succeed; we cannot afford to fail. The future and the life of an entire generation of people hangs in the balance and we cannot fail them.

The word most often used to describe the Haitian population is "resilience". History has proven that. Many say that Haiti has just had a string of bad luck. Others say that it is cultural, and others say it is a curse. One thing is for sure, Haitians are fighters and they need our help now more than ever to continue fighting.

In my constituency, I see how proud Haitian Canadians are of their culture and heritage, and they are all proud Canadians. But when it comes to the Haitian community, like most ethnic communities, agreement on the nature of the problems they face, never mind the solutions, are never unanimous.

*Standing Order 52*

We had two round tables in the span of a few months with the Haitian community in Saint-Michel, in the east end of Montreal, right after the earthquake. Many problems were highlighted, and of course, there were differences in analyzing just the problems. Right away, there were differences along political lines. We also had gender differences: the women blamed it on the men, and the men obviously blamed it on the women. There were generational differences, where the young blamed it on the old and the old blamed it on the young. Finally, there were also people who blamed it on the fact that they had left 30 years ago or they had just left five years ago, and there were differences from that perspective.

Solutions proposed were broken down between short term and long term. Short-term problems immediately following the earthquake were simply finding shelter and food for those most in need. Long-term solutions dealt with infrastructure for such things as roads, bridges, water and sewage; but the other infrastructure problem that needed to be dealt with was the government, because citizens everywhere in the world rely on their government to some degree.

We should look around us in Canada. Everyday services are delivered. We have health care and simple things such as garbage collection. If we look outside, it is snowing in Ottawa. We have snow removal, police services, post office, licences, and so on. Canadians may complain about the cost or the delivery of those services, but even the Conservatives, who despise government, agree that we need government to deliver some services.

In Canada, we debate the amount of services that the government should deliver. In Haiti, the debate is which government can actually provide the minimal amount of services. We are talking about a government that cannot deliver the basic services. We are talking about a government where, when individuals go to get their birth certificate, it is not available. When they try to get their passport, there is nobody at the counter. When they try to mail a letter, they cannot get a postage stamp. When they go to make a deposit, they cannot find a bank that is open. When they try to withdrawal money at a bank, there is no money in the bank.

Those are basic services. Canada is a stable, successful democracy with a good track record of providing essential services to the population, regardless of which political party is in power. Today we are debating how we, as a successful and prosperous country, can assist Haiti in taking steps toward becoming a successful and prosperous country.

Haitians' political history is full of traumatic upheavals. Regime after regime in Haiti engaged in grossly corrupt activities that put the ambitions of those in power before the needs of the people. This has led to Haiti being underdeveloped, but what is more troubling is that this has diminished the ability of any political force to bring about the change necessary to put Haiti on a path towards sustainable development.

● (2055)

There needs to be a shift in Haiti's political culture to ensure that the old ways of doing business that have failed are replaced by new good practices that make it possible for Haiti to govern itself successfully and democratically.

To succeed in its reconstruction effort, Haiti needs an overhaul that brings stability, rule of law and a trust in its political system. We can see clearly in the protests taking place daily that there is no trust between Haiti's democratic institutions and her people.

Trust must be established so that any political force that forms a government after an election has the moral authority to actually lead the country. People will not follow a government that they view as illegitimate. Until legitimacy is woven into the Haitian political fabric, there can be no lasting peace or progress.

There is tremendous desire in Haiti to rebuild and move forward. The spirit of the Haitian people is not in question. What is required right now is to stop the chaos that threatens to tear Haiti apart. This cannot be done without the world being involved.

What is needed now is action to shore up Haiti's democracy and aid. Proper democratic institutions are not built overnight, but they are necessary to create a climate where a state can govern itself successfully, develop its resources, deliver services and change governments in a stable and orderly fashion.

Right now, Haitians are divided and angry because they feel that their democratic institutions are illegitimate. This feeling is the wound that must be closed if Haiti is to survive. Until that wound is closed, aid must flow to Haiti. Aid is a bandage, not a solution, but the bleeding must stop before the wound can be stitched.

Food, clean water, medicine, money, clothing and shelter, everything and anything at this point can contribute to reducing the suffering that is currently ravaging Haiti. The rebuilding process begins with aid. If aid can be delivered fairly and efficiently, it can create the calm space and good will between the Haitian people, the Haitian government and the international community, which is necessary to begin tackling more systemic problems.

Success breeds success. We need to get aid right and use that momentum to tackle the deeper issues I mentioned, and keep doing this until Haiti is ready to stand on her own two feet.

Given Canada's deep ties to Haiti, I ask the government to do whatever it can to assist Haiti by collaborating with our partners to provide lifesaving aid to Haiti during this difficult time and to do the work with the Haitian people and the international community to build democratic institutions in Haiti that work.

\* \* \*

● (2100)

[*Translation*]

#### MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Before moving on to questions and comments, I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following public bill to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-10, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts.

S.O. 52

[English]

● (2105)

**SITUATION IN HAITI**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have been listening to the debate of the Liberal, Bloc and NDP. In general, everybody agrees with what has been said in reference to the problems and issues facing Haitians and the fault lines that have developed since the earthquake. I do not think anybody here does not agree with respect to the main aspects of what is happening.

Questions have been asked of the Government of Canada. As a responsible government, we have stated that Haiti receives the second-largest amount of our foreign aid. We are working with the international community.

Basically, the bottom line is when Haitians needed aid, Canada sent aid. The member is right. He has had his round table conferences with the Haitian community. As another of my colleagues has said, there are a lot of things we can do.

The main aspect of this is that we need to work together. This government has committed a tremendous amount of money, over \$1 billion, to help Haiti. Haiti is a priority for the government. I want to assure members that we will continue working with it and everyone else to achieve what many of us are repeating tonight.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Madam Speaker, I would like to ensure that we understand correctly. In the headlines today, for example, I read that Canada was to discuss Haitian elections. I think we have to stop discussing and start acting, have Canada take a leadership position, take action and decide with the rest of the UN to do what is right and ensure that the proper results, whether it requires a recount, come out of the election.

Canada has to take a leadership position. It has to stop saying that it committing money but actually do it. That is all I am asking.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Madam Speaker, the member has been saying that he is asking the Government of Canada to do this. He mentioned a headline that said we were in discussions. What it means is we are working with our international partners, we are working with the government of Haiti to address those issues of electoral irregularities. He needs to understand it is very important for Canada not to be by itself, but to be with its other international partners, including the current government of Haiti.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Madam Speaker, once again, Canada should be taking a leadership role. It cannot be waiting for its international partners. It has to drag its international partners. I am asking for that.

Many promises were made after the earthquake to bring in Haitian refugees and Haitian immigrants. I have an office full of immigration files that could be processed overnight. These people have been asking to come to Canada for years and the files are still sitting in my offices. There are still constituents waiting for family members to come to our country. The government was supposed to react within 30 days, 60 days, 90 days. We are still waiting, one year later.

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs for the Americas.

First, I would like to commend CIDA, the Foreign Affairs and National Defence departments and ministries for an extraordinary effort in a time of absolute disaster. Understandably, those on the ground immediately following the disaster had to deal with missing loved ones, friends and colleagues and their supreme efforts must not go unnoticed or be forgotten.

Canada has a long-term commitment to Haiti and there is no other country that has been a better friend to the people of Haiti than Canada. Our strong, long-term relationship with Haiti strengthens our ties to the Organization of American States, the Caribbean community, the common market and key countries in the Americas, such as Brazil and Chile. Canadians care about Haiti. This is our hemisphere and we have family and personal ties there. It is also the poorest country in the hemisphere.

I had an opportunity to visit Haiti in 2006, well before the latest disasters struck. It was at the time, even then, the poorest country in the western hemisphere. At the time, elections were being conducted and were reasonably well managed, although the turnout was relatively low. Of note, even at that time the Haitian people had many desperate needs, with massive unemployment and civil unrest. The Haitian government was unable to cope with its country's human needs, coupled with large foreign debt, without massive amounts of foreign aid.

The countryside was denuded of foliage, creating widespread flooding in seasonal rains, bringing the remaining soil and silt and filling up the only substantial power dam, preventing the generation of electricity. Then the earthquake hit and now a cholera outbreak.

Haiti is vulnerable to natural disasters, as last January's earthquake and hurricane Thomas this fall attest. In addition, the current cholera outbreak has already resulted in the death of more than 2,000 Haitians and has reached the Dominican Republic and Florida as well. It is important to remember that rebuilding Haiti is a significant undertaking that will require a sustained international effort measurable in years, not in weeks and months.

While great needs remain, Canadian initiatives are making a difference in the lives of Haitians. Despite the extraordinary challenges Haiti has faced in the past year, our commitment to Haiti is long term. I am proud to say that Canadians themselves have demonstrated unprecedented support for Haiti in response to the earthquake that took place nearly a year ago. In fact, they donated \$220 million to charitable organizations and the Government of Canada is matching their donations. Almost 60% of the matched funding has been allocated to initiatives in Haiti.

## S.O. 52

The international response has ensured that immediate lifesaving needs following the earthquake are being addressed. Canada is the second most important bilateral donor in Haiti after the United States. We have a long-term credible presence in Haiti that allows us to respond quickly and effectively when disaster occurs. For example, our health partners were instrumental in the early detection of the current cholera outbreak.

Canada's leadership, expertise and development assistance are valued by Haiti and the United States, as well as other key partners in this hemisphere. In fact, our credibility with Haiti lends us influence in new mechanisms set up for the coordination of humanitarian and reconstruction efforts such as the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission and the multi-donor Haiti reconstruction fund.

With a commitment of \$1 billion over six years between 2006 and 2012, Haiti is Canada's leading development recipient in the Americas. Our long-term presence in Haiti means that throughout the country we have trusted partners to work with and mobilize in the event of a disaster. The situation in Haiti is too large and multi-faceted for Canada to make a difference alone, so we are working to ensure that our efforts and those of other partners are mutually reinforcing.

• (2110)

Canada is working with a number of international and Canadian partners, including the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the Caribbean Community and Common Market and key donor countries in the Americas and Europe, such as the United States, the European Union and Brazil.

Canada's engagement in Haiti has demonstrated a whole of government approach. Our efforts have drawn on the skills of a number of departments, including the Canadian International Development Agency, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Finance Canada, the Canadian Border Services Agency, the RCMP and the Department of National Defence to achieve results for the people of Haiti.

On our response to the devastating effects of the earthquake nearly a year ago, Canada has now fully disbursed more than \$150 million in immediate humanitarian assistance, contributing to the distribution of food aid for 4.3 million people and emergency housing and supplies to 2.2 million people.

Through our \$400 million commitment, Canada is supplying daily meals to 400,000 school children, has provided \$31.3 million to the multi-donor Haiti reconstruction fund and has earmarked \$30 million for a call for proposals from Canadian organizations for short-term recovery and reconstruction projects in Haiti.

Some Haitian municipalities will receive technical assistance from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to improve their delivery of basic services, such as land management, roads, water provisions and garbage collection.

Here are some of the results that we and our partners have achieved since the earthquake struck on January 12: one million Haitians have been engaged in cash for work programs; over four million Haitians have received emergency food aid; we have provided medical care for 90% of displaced persons in Port-au-

Prince; we have constructed temporary offices for the ministries of health and agriculture and for the secretariat of the interim Haiti recovery commission; and we have constructed a prison for 750 inmates and have deployed 25 Canadian prison experts.

We are now on track to meet the commitment we made at the International Donors' Conference in New York in March. However, there have been some challenges. As 30% of the public service died in the earthquake and 40% of the Haitian government's infrastructure was damaged, this has hampered the government's ability to respond to the basic needs of the population.

When assessing progress in Haiti, we need to remember the magnitude of the devastation and remember how long it took to rebuild in other similar situations. We all remember the tsunami in Asia. Following that disaster in 2004, right around Christmas time I might add, it took over five years to rebuild 139,000 houses in Indonesia. In fact, we need look no further than our closest neighbour when we want an example of how long reconstruction can take. As we all know, the United States of America, with all of the resources possible at its disposal, is still working to reconstruct New Orleans in the aftermath of Katrina.

Governance challenges in Haiti have been compounded by the current land tenure system and the lack of safe landfill sites to remove rubble from Port-au-Prince. Part of the reason that more than one million people still live in camps is that they have no other place to go. Canada supports efforts to address these issues and continues to encourage the government of Haiti to undertake the needed reforms to clear the way for rebuilding.

Canada has been clear on our commitment to Haiti and it is long term. While great needs remain, Canadian initiatives are making a difference in the lives of Haitians.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is important to remember that there are thousands and thousands of children in homes and orphanages in Haiti, most of whom have at least one parent still living but have been placed in institutions because their families are finding it difficult to manage.

My question is about risk. Haiti is at particular risk because cholera transmission is closely linked to inadequate environmental management. Haiti suffered chronic water supply and sanitation problems even prior to the earthquake. Haiti was ranked last out of 147 countries for water security in 2002.

I am wondering what the hon. member thinks should be done immediately in the short term and what is needed in the long term to address water supply and sanitation issues.

## S.O. 52

• (2115)

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with my hon. colleague. The need in Haiti was desperate long before the earthquake struck. As I related, I was there in 2006 and I could see the difficulties and problems it had on sanitation and on water provisions. This has been an ongoing circumstance in Haiti for many years and the earthquake certainly did not help it whatsoever.

My understanding is that one of the problems in bringing back infrastructure, water facilities and sanitation facilities is the land tenure in Port-au-Prince where the land is tied up and people cannot get ownership and cannot move in equipment to start the reconstruction of the infrastructure that is needed. That is something that will need to be worked out because, obviously, to rebuild Haiti and Port-au-Prince with all its great needs, we need to start in the ground with the proper sanitation facilities and the proper water for the people.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to go to Haiti with the hon. member for Edmonton East in 2006. We were part of the same mission. I had a chance to see how resilient the Haitian people are, despite all their challenges. They are a very happy people despite it all and they want to overcome the difficult situation they find themselves in. They are very welcoming and very charming. I was quite surprised by that. Despite all the problems they are currently going through, with the earthquake, cholera and problems surrounding the elections, I hope that these people will continue to have the resilience they need to get through this.

I want to know whether the hon. member shares this same hope and this same confidence that the Haitian people inspire in me. Does he believe as I do that they will overcome these challenges because they have the desire and resilience to do so?

[English]

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** Madam Speaker, yes, I was in Haiti with my colleague and we were there for the elections at that time when there was optimism even on the elections. They were being reasonably well run and it was the parliamentary elections. We also had a chance to go out into the community in the Jacmel area where we could really see the enthusiasm of the local mayor and the citizenry about the improvements that had been made to Jacmel at that time.

I have to believe that the optimism of the Haitian people is deep and resilient and we all have to believe that their optimism will still be there and that they will look forward to rebuilding their country once again, the same as Jacmel. It has to be rebuilt all over again.

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take the floor tonight to speak to the United Nations stabilization force in Haiti and to the critical support provided by the Government of Canada in this very important operation.

As this government has said before, our vision for Haiti is a country built on foundations of peace, security, rule of law and economic prosperity. This is a vision shared by the international community. The United Nations stabilization mission in Haiti, or MINUSTAH, as it is known by its acronym, is one of the most

important manifestations of the international community's commitment to Haiti's stabilization and reconstruction.

Canada remains strongly committed to MINUSTAH. This has been a priority mission since it was established in 2004. Prior to the earthquake, Canada was already contributing high level Canadian Forces support and a number of civilian police officers and corrections experts to the mission. Since the earthquake, we have deployed even more support. Indeed, MINUSTAH now represents the largest number of civilians deployed to a mission outside of Afghanistan.

Canada recognizes MINUSTAH's continuing efforts in Haiti and the role of the United Nations in coordinating the international response. Since 2004, MINUSTAH has contributed to the overall improvement of the security situation in Haiti, including by playing a crucial role in managing the current security situation following Haiti's most recent elections.

MINUSTAH was established as a multi-dimensional, integrated mission, combining both military and civilian functions. The Security Council has provided MINUSTAH with a robust mandate under chapter 7 of the UN charter, which allows for the use of force in its implementation.

As a member of the Group of Friends of Haiti at the UN, Canada worked closely with Brazil and other countries committed to MINUSTAH to play an important role in the drafting of the resolution and renewing the mission mandate adopted by the Security Council in October of this year. MINUSTAH is also protecting civilians, supporting the political process in Haiti, professionalizing the Haitian national police and reforming the justice and security system reform.

MINUSTAH has also faced difficulties. The events of January 12 of this year took a heavy toll on the mission. Some 101 UN personnel perished in the Haiti earthquake, the largest losses to a UN mission in a single event. The victims included the special representative of the UN secretary-general, Hédi Annabi, and eight Canadians serving in police and civilian roles in MINUSTAH.

Despite those losses, the mission carried on, making valuable contributions to the relief effort and working with the government of Haiti and the international community to mitigate the effects of the disaster on Haiti's people. Canada has commended MINUSTAH for its efforts and has consistently encouraged it to continue to work for and with the Haitian population.

After the earthquake, the UN secretary-general requested additional resources for MINUSTAH, including police, to strengthen the mission's work in Haiti. Canada supported this request for more resources in these dire circumstances. Moreover, we provided additional personnel to the mission, something I will return to momentarily.

These additional personnel were necessary both in the post-earthquake context and in the lead-up to the Haitian elections in November, giving MINUSTAH a role in both. MINUSTAH's authorized uniform strength currently remains at 8,940 troops and 4,391 civilian police, alongside 1,900 civilians.

## S.O. 52

In his latest report on MINUSTAH in September of this year, the UN secretary-general further noted that, "Consolidating any gains in Haiti will depend in large part on sustained support from the international community, including to MINUSTAH".

The secretary-general also recommended maintaining mission staff at its current level until the security environment has been assessed after the inauguration of a new president and the new government. Canada supported this cautious approach, as did the UN Security Council. Under the current mission mandate, the numbers of military and police personnel have been maintained.

● (2120)

In addition, the Security Council asked the Secretary-General to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the security situation following the election and the transfer of power to a new government in 2011.

The Secretary-General's report also underscored the importance of the authority given to MINUSTAH to provide direct logistical support and technical expertise to Haitian officials, though this authority is temporary. Because the earthquake dealt a serious blow to Haiti's bureaucracy and the state infrastructure, Canada agreed with the importance of allowing MINUSTAH to continue to play this role until other support mechanisms can take over.

Canada has been clear that this temporary direct support must be part of a process of constructive co-operation with the host government that strives, through training and mentoring, to build that government's capacity to maintain stability and to deliver services to its citizens.

Our government is committed to keeping our activities aligned with Haitian priorities with a view to transitioning back all governance functions to Haitian authorities once the interim need has passed.

In this vein, Canada supports the continuation of MINUSTAH's work to strengthen Haiti's justice and security systems in the areas of police, corrections and border services, to provide complementary support to MINUSTAH's work in this area. The assistance provided by the stabilization and reconstruction task force, known by its acronym START, through the global peace and security fund in Haiti, focuses primarily on the reform of the justice and security system.

Since 2006, Canada has provided nearly \$72 million to fund the purchase of equipment to allow the Haitian national police to patrol on land and on sea for the construction of facilities for both Haitian police and corrections officers, as well as to provide funding for the improvement of community security and the re-establishment of the justice system.

Canada believes that MINUSTAH will continue to play a vital role as we collectively work to put Haiti back on the path toward long-term prosperity. For this reason, Canada is proud to contribute significantly to MINUSTAH.

After the earthquake, Canada increased the number of police officers available for deployment. Up to 150 police have been authorized for deployment under the Canadian police arrangement. As of this month, there are 132 Canadian police officers serving in

Haiti under this arrangement, including the MINUSTAH deputy police commissioner for operations.

Canada also increased its capacity to deploy officers from the Correctional Service of Canada to MINUSTAH to up to 25. Seventeen officers are currently serving in Haiti thanks to DFAIT's global peace and security fund.

In addition, the Canadian Forces deployed an additional five staff officers initially for six months. The Minister of National Defence recently announced the extension of this deployment to April 2011.

The Government of Canada's support to MINUSTAH is another clear example of the priority we give to the people of Haiti. This support is mirrored by our partners in the hemisphere whose contributions demonstrate the importance of the continent's solidarity for the sustainable development of Haiti.

We believe that this unique engagement is opening a new era of hemispheric co-operation. Thus, the Government of Canada will remain strongly committed to MINUSTAH, including by continuing to deploy police, corrections and Canadian Forces personnel to the mission by continuing to play a key role in the Group of Friends of Haiti in New York, which helps to develop MINUSTAH's mandate, and by supporting key projects to assist the consolidation of Haiti's police, correctional services, border management and justice sectors, in order to complement and to support MINUSTAH in these areas.

● (2125)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am interested in knowing in terms of the future reconstruction in Haiti whether any studies have been done about the use of wood.

I am mindful that in China there was an earthquake in the last year or two and the Chinese were rebuilding, I believe, the entire area that was devastated by the earthquake using Canadian lumber because lumber can survive earthquake conditions much better than bricks and concrete can.

If we have an opportunity to help the situation by providing Canadian lumber and therefore assist if another earthquake occurred as wood can withstand the effects of an earthquake, it would be a win-win situation all around.

I have not heard anything about this. A bill passed the B.C. legislature and another one passed the Quebec legislature. We have a private member's bill before this House as we speak on this whole issue of encouraging the use of wood in government buildings.

What is the government doing with regard to exporting the idea to Haiti?

● (2130)

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for a very worthy question. I can tell my colleague that in fact it is a matter that is being addressed at the moment.



S.O. 52

There have been frustrating delays, as my colleague mentioned, with regard to land reform with the allocation of property, the change of land title for population resettlement and for the establishment of light commercial and industrial centres which will require new housing for the labour forces which will be employed. The Minister of International Cooperation has been talking with a number of companies across Canada who are prepared to engage in a variety of construction projects, one of which does rely significantly on timber.

There are also Canadian companies which have experience in building hurricane-proof structures for business and government as well as for residential purposes. Among their central elements are wood skeletal structures which my hon. colleague quite correctly says have the flex and resilience to withstand not only extreme weather but also the climate conditions in which reconstruction will take place in Haiti.

**Hon. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Canadians are very generous people. They give freely at times like these and Canadian governments regardless of their stripe are very generous and give freely at times like these.

I wonder if my hon. colleague could comment on the importance of making sure that the money Canadians and the Government of Canada give at times like these is actually spent in areas that will do the most good. I am speaking obviously of corruption. In places like Haiti and Afghanistan it is just a reality. There is a lot of corruption and money that we generously give sometimes goes in the wrong direction.

I wonder if the Secretary of State could comment on what Canada is doing and the importance of making sure that the money we do give is going to the right recipient.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Madam Speaker, I can assure my colleague that Canada and the other countries among the friends of Haiti and the international donor community are watching very carefully for transparency. There has been a great outpouring of charity from Canada and other countries around the world that have contributed to the short term and longer term reconstruction of Haiti.

There have been temptations. We have seen some attempts within the Haitian community to resort to previous forms of involvement which unfortunately has resulted in the shrinkage of international assistance.

When we held the Montreal conference in February last year and subsequently followed that up with the donors conference in New York, we made it clear that while the ultimate decisions will be made by the government and the people of Haiti, the United Nations interim reconstruction commission will ensure that the money is disbursed transparently and effectively.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this emergency debate today on the situation in Haiti, which is extremely disturbing indeed. By way of background and to give some idea of the problems the country faces, I will quote some statistics concerning the earthquake in Haiti.

The earthquake on January 12 caused damage on an unprecedented scale. Estimates put the number of dead at 222,570 and the

number of injured at 300,000. Approximately 1.3 million people are living in temporary shelters in the Port-au-Prince area, and 600,000 have left the earthquake-damaged areas to take refuge elsewhere.

The Haitian government was severely crippled by the earthquake. It is estimated that more than 60% of government, administrative and economic infrastructure was destroyed. Haiti does not have a large government, yet one-third of the 60,000 public servants were killed in the earthquake. Half of Haiti's 8,500 prison inmates escaped. One hundred and one UN employees who were in the country when the earthquake struck lost their lives.

The court house, the justice department, the public security department and the legislature were destroyed. More than 105,000 homes were destroyed and more than 208,000 were damaged. One and a half million people found themselves homeless. Nearly 4,000 Haitian students died, 1,234 schools were destroyed and 2,500 were damaged. The damage is estimated at \$7.9 billion, and 70% was suffered by the private sector.

It is estimated that Haiti needs \$11.5 billion, including 50% for social services, 17% for infrastructure and housing, and 15% for the environment and risk management. The Red Cross is working to help Haitians: 80,000 households have received temporary accommodation, 95,000 patients have received medical care and 90,000 m<sup>3</sup> of water has been distributed to 118 sites.

I wanted to provide this overview to remind members of how serious these events are. In our era, we live with the ever-present media, online, in real time and on the news networks. We are touched and struck by events, and after that, whether we like it or not, they dissipate and we stop thinking about them. That is the risk for any crisis in the world and it is also the case for Haiti. I think it is a good idea to remind ourselves of the seriousness of what has happened there. Then, there is what came after: the recent cholera outbreak, which is another problem for the people of Haiti, as though they needed that. Then there are the issues and considerations pertaining to the legislative and presidential elections, as well as the unrest and climate of violence they have caused.

I will quote Dany Laferrière. You may know of him, Madam Chair. He is a Quebec author of Haitian origin. He is famous in Quebec and throughout la Francophonie. He said that Quebec has everything except for independence and that Haiti has nothing, except for independence. This turn of phrase reminds us that Haitians took charge of themselves long ago. They are an independent people who can decide their own destiny.

• (2135)

This independence is meaningless unless they are truly masters of their own destiny, which requires that they choose their leaders. In my opinion, this need to choose one's leaders is the very essence of democracy and independence for a country.

In light of all of Haiti's current difficulties, I cannot help but send my best regards to the Haitian people, who are the brothers and sisters of the Quebec people. More than 90% of Haitian nationals and the Haitian diaspora in Canada live in Quebec. It is the only nation in the Americas, together with Quebec, that has French as its common public language and official language.

S.O. 52

The current problems surrounding the presidential election must not overshadow the fact that democracy and the governance of the Haitian state do not rest solely with the president, or rather, should not rest solely with the president, as is currently the case.

As I mentioned earlier today, in 2006, I had the opportunity to take part in a parliamentary mission to meet with Haitian parliamentarians in the context of legislative elections. At the time, I noted that the difference between the magnificent presidential palace, on a beautiful green lawn, and the legislative building, an old tourism office where parliamentarians were crammed in on top of one another, illustrated the importance given to the presidency in the minds of many Haitians, or at least in the spirit of how that country engages in politics at this time, in other words, the disproportionate importance given to the presidency.

Basically, all we are hearing about is the Haitian presidency, the three candidates who are fighting for it and the problems this is causing for the second round. I hope that current events will not keep us from thinking about the fact that legislative elections are also taking place, and that parliamentarians also need to have some legitimacy. They must represent their constituents, and this must be a fundamental part of the democratic process in Haiti, especially when the country is going through a crisis, as it is right now.

Ever since that mission in 2006 during which I met Haitian parliamentarians, I have been concerned about the need to strengthen the parliamentary system in Haiti. Of course the Haitians themselves must be the ones to reflect and to work on this, and to do something.

Personally, I am trying to do my part. I thought it might be helpful to create a friendship group, an association that might not be entirely official or recognized by the House, but an association nonetheless of Haitian and Canadian parliamentarians who wish to create ties and reflect on how the Canadian Parliament and Canadian MPs and senators can help Haiti, and how to support Haitian parliamentarians to give that institution more prominence.

To that end, three colleagues—from three different political parties—and I founded such an association a few months ago: the Canada-Haiti Parliamentary Group. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the three other co-founders: the hon. members for Bourassa, Outremont and Edmonton East.

● (2140)

I hope that our association, our supporters and our policies will be able to improve the situation in Haiti substantially.

I would like to speak in more detail about immigration, which I followed closely as the Bloc Québécois immigration critic.

In the wake of the 2010 earthquake, the federal government announced special measures to fast-track the processing of family reunification applications. In January 2006, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration announced extraordinary measures for Haitians directly affected by the earthquake, including fast-tracking the processing of applications in the family reunification category.

Here is a list of the measures: consular assistance and evacuation of Canadian citizens who were in Haiti when the earthquake struck; priority processing of applications in various categories—including family reunification applications from Quebec—for those directly

and seriously affected by the earthquake in Haiti; evacuation of adopted Haitian children coming to Canada, which happened very quickly—it should be said that the process was already quite advanced in these cases; lifting of fees and consideration of other relevant factors related to the difficulties faced by temporary residents in Canada; lifting of visa requirements for aid workers and evacuees coming to Canada; temporary lifting of all removals to Haiti, which seems obvious to me; and information sessions that took place all over.

I would like to talk about Quebec's humanitarian sponsorship program in detail. In Canada, it is the federal government's responsibility to determine who can sponsor, who can be sponsored and for which family members the guarantor is required to prove their financial capacity. Since the 1991 Canada-Quebec agreement, Quebec alone deals with the integration of immigrants within its borders.

Given that family reunification is a key component in integrating immigrants into Quebec society, the Bloc Québécois feels that family reunification should be handed over to Quebec, since it is already responsible for all family-related issues. In addition, this measure would allow for more efficient processing of family reunification applications and would mean that most procedures would be concentrated within Quebec's immigration and cultural communities department, while still giving Ottawa the right to monitor security issues.

The Government of Quebec has the expertise to do this and has demonstrated it by moving ahead with its own selection system to reunite Haitians affected by the disaster, 90% of whom live in Quebec, as I mentioned earlier.

In response to an exceptional situation, the Government of Quebec decided to adopt special immigration measures. On February 3, it announced the creation of the special humanitarian sponsorship program, which was effective from February to the end of July 2010 and which temporarily helped reunite families by allowing Quebec residents to sponsor brothers, sisters and children over the age of 22.

Through this initiative, Quebec welcomed 3,000 Haitians, in addition to the 1,900 sponsorship applications that were already awaiting approval from Ottawa. Furthermore, another Quebec resident, a relative or not, could act as a co-guarantor for the five-year financial commitment, to make it easier to meet the financial requirements.

As of November 4, the Government of Quebec had received 8,354 applications through this measure. In addition, 2,400 Quebec selection certificates were issued. The majority of the applications from Quebec are still awaiting approval from Ottawa, which only deals with issues of health and safety.

On August 30, at the last minute, the Canadian Minister of Citizenship and Immigration quietly issued a reminder that the special measures for Haiti would come to an end on September 1, practically the following day. After the announcement of the end of the so-called special measures, an operational bulletin was published to give instructions regarding the processing of applications for Haitian nationals.

What does all of this mean? The new timeframe to complete the eligibility assessments for sponsorship applications will be 40 days as opposed to 10 days.

• (2145)

Applications that were to be processed as a priority within a 12-week deadline will now be processed as quickly as possible. We do not really know what that means in terms of a deadline. Fees will be charged again. What is more, if I can make an editorial comment, it is particularly questionable to try to resolve our deficit problems with permanent residency applications from Haiti.

Haitian citizens in Canada applying for a work visa will now have to get a valid labour market opinion and pay the applicable fees. I will come back to that because I think it is very important. Eligibility for the interim federal health plan no longer applies to the new applications. CIC's priorities will change.

Although the department says it is very open to Quebec's right to have its own program that, among other things, broadens the definition of family reunification beyond immediate family, and even though it recognizes that possibility, in fact the choices made by Quebec are a second priority. Only people who correspond to the traditional definition of the family class established by the federal government are entitled to be top priority. It should be noted that the expression "second priority" is a euphemism, because it is not in fact a priority.

On October 6, 2010, only 18 Haitians arrived on Quebec soil under that program. Thousands of applications had been filed and 493 applications were received by CIC, which means less than 4% of these people got as far as Quebec soil on October 6. We are quite concerned about the federal government's lack of flexibility and the fact that it often deems documents not to be credible.

I will try to be quick because I see that my time is running out and I have a lot to say about immigration. The Bloc Québécois is very concerned and believes that the temporary work visas should remain open-ended without any need for a labour market opinion. These opinions ensure that foreign nationals are not used as cheap labour to fill jobs that could otherwise be filled by Canadians. It is a process the Bloc Québécois generally agrees with. Nonetheless, we find it appropriate that this requirement be waived for Haitians who are already in Quebec or Canada, especially since there is currently a moratorium on sending them back to Haiti because the situation is difficult and it is almost impossible to do.

We therefore find ourselves in a situation where there are people who were in Canada during the earthquake for one reason or another, who now have the right to remain in Canada for an indefinite period of time and who have been told that they can, for example, continue to work temporarily to meet their needs. These people may be driven to work in the underground economy. By requiring a labour market opinion, a fairly complex procedure that sometimes does not result in employment because the opinion is negative, we are depriving these people of a way of supporting themselves and are therefore pushing them toward working in the underground economy or pushing them into difficulty meeting their needs. It is completely counter-productive.

*S.O. 52*

I hope that the government will quickly remedy this situation and allow the people who cannot be sent back to Haiti as things stand to work to meet their needs.

In conclusion, although a lot of work has been done by citizens and the federal government, there is still much more to be done. It has always been said that the Haitians are a very resilient people.

• (2150)

They have suffered a lot and we must provide them with support. I am convinced that they have the desire to overcome this situation. They are very resilient. There are promising areas everywhere in Haiti. We spoke earlier in the House about Jacmel, a location that I had the opportunity to visit and that represents great potential for us. It is up to us to develop it.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I know that the member is an expert in this chamber on the area of immigration issues. I know he had not quite fleshed out all of his ideas on the subject, so I want to give him an opportunity to explain a little more about the open-ended work permit and other points that he had.

In addition, I had been wanting to ask the government members about the status of the matching funds program. There is one member coming up who will probably have all the answers I am looking for. Perhaps the member who just spoke knows a little about how much was collected and how that whole system has evolved and is working.

• (2155)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I humbly admit that I cannot answer the part about the funds and whether the government has already paid the equivalent of what the public donated. I will leave that question for someone who knows the answer. I am flattered that my colleague called me an expert in the area of immigration and I thank him very much. I am not yet an expert, but I have been following this issue closely for over two years as critic for the Bloc Québécois. His question gives me another opportunity to speak.

There seems to be an inconsistency in the government's position on temporary work visas. If they say that an individual cannot be deported because the situation in his country is untenable, which the Bloc agrees with, then we must give him the means to work during this temporary period—which is indeterminate for the time being—that he is in Canada. We are not asking for free permanent residency for these people, but just for a way to allow them to continue to work temporarily.

The government may be afraid that by holding an official job in Canada, these people will qualify for Canadian worker programs and apply for permanent residence. I do not want to impugn the government's motives, but we get the feeling that that is what is behind the government's actions. The government, which abruptly cancelled this support measure, is telling itself that if people stay and work under the table, they will not be able to claim permanent residence later because they will not be able to prove they qualify in the Canadian experience class.

S.O. 52

If that were so, it would be slightly convoluted and deplorable reasoning. These people need our support, and we have to keep on helping them. In all cases, the federal government could have been more flexible and granted temporary resident permits to people who just wanted to come and see their family in Montreal or elsewhere in order to catch their breath, have a change of scenery and distance themselves from the earthquake in Haiti. They had no intention of living here and going through winter in Quebec. The government showed no flexibility with regard to these people. That is something else we condemn.

[English]

**Hon. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I did listen attentively to my colleague.

I just want clarification. Is the member suggesting that the Government of Canada artificially create jobs just to satisfy this need or that it just make sure that, for all the jobs that are out there, everybody has an equal opportunity to get those jobs? Is he talking about artificially creating equal results or making sure there is equal opportunity?

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Madam Speaker, I sincerely thank my colleague for his question. As I am very familiar with the file, I perhaps did not express myself well and I took shortcuts. I will explain again, from the beginning.

When the Haiti earthquake occurred, Haitian nationals may have been working or studying in Canada. They were living temporarily in Canada.

Take the example of someone working on a temporary visa. The government said that, upon the expiry of the temporary work visa, the individual could renew it or apply for a new one if they had completed their studies, for example, in order to be allowed to work in Canada and have an income. That was the government's reasoning and it was completely logical. We are not talking about an inordinate number of applicants; we are simply talking about the Haitians who were temporarily in Canada. We could not send them back to Haiti. We are simply asking why this measure was not extended.

Some of them may be able to obtain a labour market opinion, but others may not. For example, for jobs requiring fewer qualifications, it is obviously more difficult to prove that an individual is the only one qualified for the job and that there is a shortage of labour in Canada in that area.

I understand that we cannot invent jobs. That is not what I am suggesting. If a Haitian national is currently living here and cannot be deported or returned to that country because of a moratorium, he should be allowed to find a job. That will not affect the job market. The purpose of the labour market opinion is to prevent massive waves of temporary workers from destabilizing the job market and depriving Quebecers and Canadians of jobs. We understand this measure, but it is not justified or necessary for the few workers that might be affected. I do not have the figure at hand, but I am sufficiently versed in this matter to know that the number of Haitians would not destabilize the job market.

The government understood this because it took that step, but then terminated it. The government was on the right track and should have maintained this measure, just as it is maintaining the moratorium on deportations to Haiti. When the situation is deemed to be stable enough to lift the moratorium on deportations, then we can also rescind the special measures allowing those persons, who are prisoners of sorts in Canada, to be employed.

• (2200)

[English]

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Madam Speaker, the government received a lot of credit for being quick off the mark on relief efforts in the Haiti earthquake situation. It matched all the funds that Canadians donated to the effort.

How would my colleague rate the government's involvement in that disaster since that initial quick start?

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Madam Speaker, I am not about to give any performance ratings, if that is indeed what the hon. member was asking for.

From what I know of immigration, I would say that at first it seemed a lot was being done to impress the public. The government said it was open and that it was going to really change things. In practice, however, it seems that things are more or less "business as usual". There seems to be a gap between what the government says in public and what it actually does.

The day after tomorrow, the members of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration will be meeting with senior officials from Citizenship and Immigration Canada for further clarification. I realize they are dealing with some major challenges and that they are very dedicated and very competent, but I think that, in terms of policy, the government could give clearer directions and allow those officials greater latitude. Thus, they could start walking the talk, and this would also ensure that the enthusiasm and desire to do things quickly and correctly, so evident immediately after the earthquake, would still be present after all this time.

This comes back to what I was saying at the beginning of my speech: unfortunately, over time, we have a tendency to forget, but we must not forget that Haiti stills needs our support.

[English]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak on this important issue tonight. I want to thank the member for Bourassa for bringing forward this issue on Haiti.

Haiti is in our hemisphere and a very important development assistance partner for Canada. As a matter of fact, Haiti is the second largest recipient of Canadian aid, and Canadians have been generous in addressing many of the severe crises that have taken place in Haiti, including the earthquake, the cholera outbreak and other issues of good governance, violence and so on.

*S.O. 52*

Canada has been engaged in Haiti for a very long time. As a member of the foreign affairs committee in the last Parliament, I did a special report on Haiti with my colleague from Edmonton East, who spoke earlier on this issue. This issue was brought up in the last Parliament because of the concern about what was happening in Haiti. Subsequently, of course, other tragic events took place after the earthquake, such as the cholera outbreak and the violence.

Tonight in this debate we have heard from every party. The Minister of Foreign Affairs informed us of the initiatives and other things that Canada has done, including today when he met with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the secretary of foreign affairs of Mexico. As well, the Minister of International Cooperation laid out what Canada has done as part of its humanitarian assistance, including rapid response for the cholera outbreak.

We just heard from the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs for the Americas about the total diplomatic initiative and other initiatives that Canada has taken toward addressing many of the tragedies that are taking place in Haiti. We also heard from the Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women and my colleague from Edmonton East.

This whole evening we have been speaking on this matter, which is of grave concern. Listening to the Liberals, the Bloc and the NDP, we hear that most of the concerns that have been expressed are universal on both sides. That is not to say that there is no unanimity on how to address this issue. As a matter of fact there is. All parties agree. Tonight all of us have talked about this not being a partisan issue, and we have highlighted many of the issues and strong actions that the Government of Canada is taking, has taken and will continue to take in addressing many of the issues.

• (2205)

I could continue, but I would be rehashing the same old facts and problems by saying what has already been stated in the House. I myself have been asking a lot of questions, but I would rather give my opposition colleagues the opportunity during this period of time to ask me questions of relevance, which they think they need to address and that I would be more than happy to answer.

A couple of very good points have been made in reference to tonight's debate. One of them, of course, was raised by a Liberal member who talked about the approach the U.K. has taken toward humanitarian assistance.

One key point I want to make is that the Minister of International Cooperation began a new initiative about three weeks ago working with the Red Cross. This is now bringing health experts together under one umbrella so we can send a rapid response team, which will basically be made up of medical personnel, to areas where it is needed, for example, the cholera outbreak in Haiti. This is similar to DART, except that it is not run by military personnel but by Red Cross NGOs, which I believe is an excellent initiative taken by this government to address many of the humanitarian issues.

If the opposition has any questions, I would be more than glad to answer them on behalf of the government.

• (2210)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I was quite pleased that the government at the time

responded as quickly as it did and that it did set up a matching funds program, whereby funds donated by Canadians were matched by the government. I was only disappointed it did not give the same consideration for the Chilean earthquake, which happened on February 27, just shortly thereafter. Nevertheless it did the right thing.

I would like to know, to date, what is the quantity of the funds that have been collected and matched by the government, and what is the status of where the funds are at right now? I have read a couple of articles that indicate that this is somewhat in transition. There are people now who are wanting their tax receipts and will be expecting them fairly soon because they will be filing their income tax in another 30 days from now in some cases and they will want these receipts.

Could the member update me as to where things are at with the matching funds program?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Madam Speaker, I am happy to answer that question.

First and foremost, it is important to recognize that Canadians opened up their wallets to address this humanitarian crisis. There was a generous outpouring of support by Canadians and with the Government of Canada's matching funds. Those matching funds are given out on a project-by-project basis and to date the Government of Canada has given out the following. On April 8 CIDA announced \$65.15 million will be provided for humanitarian assistance. Then \$5 million was set aside by CIDA's climate change in October and \$30 million for proposals by Canadian organizations.

As proposals are coming forward, Canada will continue to provide the money. Out of the \$400 million that has been earmarked for this, \$150 million has already been disbursed.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the question I have for the parliamentary secretary is that in an emergency debate such as this, we are all of us presenting our opinions, our reflections and our concerns about a very important issue.

One of the things I was hoping to hear from the parliamentary secretary tonight in his speech, which was unfortunately cut short by him, was how exactly he feels Canadians can help in getting the Haitian people to regain their confidence in their own institutions, in their own government?

So much of their lives are taken up by international partners and international organizations that are providing, in many cases, the basic services that the state has not been able to provide, and I think one of the things we need to do going forward is to make Haitians once again believe that their own government, and therefore they themselves, will be capable of taking themselves forward through the 21st century.

I would like to hear from the parliamentary secretary on how he is hoping to achieve just that.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Madam Speaker, I do not want to get into partisan politics, but I can tell the hon. member that the debate started at 6:30 this evening and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the minister responsible for CIDA have spoken on those issues he is talking about.

S.O. 52

Now, when he did not hear it from me, he seems a little disappointed, but if he had given his attention to the debate, he would have got his answers. The Minister of Foreign Affairs said today is that he is very much concerned. He is absolutely right on one point, that there have to be transparent, democratic elections in Haiti. There has to be a transparent government in Haiti.

Yes, there is a concern with the way the elections have taken place. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has called the President of Haiti and the Prime Minister has talked to them and has told them that Canada would help out to ensure that there is a free, democratic election. Good governance is the most important aspect and, as he rightly pointed out, the trust of the Haitians toward their government is a key element. If the Haitians do not have trust in their government, it will become very hard for a reconstruction process to go on and to address many of the issues.

On that we agree very much with the hon. member. The Government of Canada, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has talked, as I said, and we will give whatever is necessary to the Haitian government to ensure that there is a transparent, fair election. We are very happy to hear there will be a recount, and we will be sending observers to that.

• (2215)

**Hon. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Madam Speaker, being quick off the mark is important because it is the right thing to do in the short term and it feels good. It is also important, once we are quick off the mark, to be right on the mark, and that is the longer-term challenge to make sure that things happen correctly over the next decade. I wonder if my hon. colleague can comment.

Canada has been quick off the mark and that has been acknowledged. I think we have done the right thing there. What are we doing to be right on the mark in the longer term to make sure that we develop Haiti to be an independent, self-sustaining, functioning country in the long term?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Madam Speaker, yes, Canada has been quick off the mark. We have addressed the short-term needs of Haiti, but we also need to address the long-term needs of Haiti.

On the long-term needs of Haiti we are working with our international partners and the reconstruction commission that has been set up in conjunction with the Government of Haiti to address the very serious and important issues.

Regretfully, at the current time, due to the problem and preoccupation with the election, some of the work required to be done has not proceeded as it should proceed. The minister has talked to the president and made it very clear that the Government of Haiti has a responsibility to its citizens to work together towards the reconstruction of Haiti.

As the minister of state has said, Canada is prepared and willing to work with the reconstruction commission and the Government of Haiti to address these issues. We will continue to work with them, but first and foremost it is critically important that there is good governance established there and that the issues arising out of the elections are resolved very quickly.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Madam Speaker, the member indicated that \$400 million had been earmarked for Haitian relief. Could the member deconstruct that \$400 million and tell us how much of it was put up by Canadians in terms of donations and how much was matched by the government? Who is doing an accounting of this? When are the people going to get their tax credits for their contributions?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Madam Speaker, overall the Government of Canada, with its matching funds and everything, has committed over \$1 billion towards Haiti. Recently the government announced \$400 million over two years to support the Haiti action plan for national recovery and development, out of which \$150 million has been allocated. We will continue with the reconstruction process.

I want to assure the member that over \$1 billion has been committed to Haiti both by Canadians and by the Government of Canada.

[Translation]

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to talk about an extremely important issue. I would just like to say that I will be splitting my time with the member for Honoré-Mercier.

I would like to start by paying tribute to my colleague and good friend, the hon. member for Bourassa, for all the work he has done on this issue. Throughout this crisis, since this horrendous event on January 12, he has been there for our colleagues and friends in the Haitian community in Montreal and Haiti, just as he always will be. His has been a very strong voice during this crisis, and he has always been present. It is thanks to him that we can have this debate this evening. It is important that we show our friendship for the Haitian people, and all the parties have done that this evening.

Our Haitian friends have gone through a few extremely difficult years. Their country was devastated by natural disasters, from deforestation to systemic poverty to the four back-to-back hurricanes in 2008 that caused enormous damage. Just when the country was starting to rebuild and get back on its feet again, the earthquake hit on January 12, causing over 250,000 deaths and making more than 1.5 million people homeless. They were literally in the street because they did not want to go back into their homes, which were still standing, for fear they would collapse on them.

Now, nearly 12 months later, cholera is ravaging the Haitian population. More than 2,000 people have died, and tens of thousands are at risk. On top of all that, Haiti is in the midst of a human and political crisis. The elections that were just held were rife with irregularities. Two candidates made it through the first round of voting to the run-off, which sparked a wave of violence throughout the country. Haitians do not believe or trust these results. They want a recount. They want to know that their votes will count, but they are not confident they will. With all the violence and instability in the country, the humanitarian aid so many Haitians depended on has almost stopped flowing, which is obviously making things even worse.

This country is experiencing catastrophes of near biblical proportions on many fronts, such as weakened infrastructure, epidemics, malnutrition, violence and anarchy as a result of a lack of respect for police forces. However, in my opinion, the greatest catastrophe is the total loss of the sense of community, of that essential trust that exists and must exist between a people and its leaders. That trust forms the foundation of the social contract. The people of Haiti do not believe that their government can offer them services and that it is there to help and serve them. When we talk of governance, we know that Haitians are worried about the elections that are currently underway. They cannot trust that their vote was properly counted or that the will of the people was represented by this vote. But governance problems go deeper than that. Haitians have lost all hope that their government will be there for them, that it will provide the safety and prosperity that any community should be able to expect from its leaders.

In my riding of Papineau we have a big Haitian community. Since I was elected two years ago, but even before that when I was a candidate, I have had the great pleasure of spending time with and befriending a number of members of that community. I have discovered even more than what I already knew, that Haitians are a passionate, proud people who are full of hope and full of life. They are a people who are interested in politics and in the future of their community and their society.

● (2220)

The people of Haiti have lost all confidence in their government's ability to provide services or even offer minimal stability. Tonight we are talking about Canada's role. We are very proud of our country, one that has always intervened with military might, whether during the first world war or the second. Our diplomacy has had an impact on the United Nations. And then there are the positions we took during the cold war and in support of nuclear disarmament. Canada has provided development aid around the world. It has always been there to spread justice and create more opportunities in the poorest countries of the world. Canada has always been there, supplying solutions to the world.

And that is why we are so proud of our country. Haiti has always been a good friend to Canada and vice versa. Because of our diaspora and our friendships, we have suffered with them throughout these difficult years. It is our duty to be there during these difficult times, and we must respond to their needs.

This evening we have spoken a lot about the desperate, essential and immediate needs. We have to be present during the elections and help find solutions to restore the public's confidence in its democratic institutions. The public needs a president who reflects the will of the country. It is important that the exemplary generosity that Canadians have shown in the months following the earthquake be validated by spending the money we promised them and targeting aid adequately.

There are many things we can do with regard to agriculture to rebuild the foundation of this country. There are things we must do with regard to civil society and the status of women. The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre spoke warmly and knowledgeably about the situation of women in Haiti and the importance of

*S.O. 52*

involving them. To me, essentially, this is how we will help Haitians regain confidence in their government's ability to provide services.

There are tens of thousands of different agencies working in Haiti—NGOs, local agencies, international agencies. They are all there to help Haitians. That is great, but we are creating a country that does not believe it can help itself. It has lost faith in itself.

Like my colleagues from Montreal east, I have the opportunity to spend time with many members of the Haitian community. We see to what extent these people can and want to improve the situation. We have to work with the NGOs in order to make the government accountable and to provide expertise from our diaspora to encourage Haitians to count on their government and to believe in their government. It is not up to Canada, the United Nations, the United States, or the Red Cross. It is up to Haitians to stand up and restore this pearl of the Antilles to its glory days.

● (2225)

[*English*]

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's speech. I am sure that virtually everyone of us in the chamber can remember where we were when we received the devastating news of the earthquake. In fact, one of the first Canadians who was recovered from the rubble was from the Kitchener—Waterloo area, and I will never forget the devastation that it caused for that family.

Now we move on to the more long-term needs, as our colleague reminded us, whether those needs be medical facilities, medical treatment, infrastructure, security or housing. I think all of us recognize as well that no government, be it the Haitian government, Canadian government or any government, can possibly meet all the needs of this situation.

I recently became aware of an NGO in my area, the Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada, that is constructing prefab homes. These homes are made of three inch foam between two slabs of galvanized steel. The panels are about 50 pounds and four people can put up one of these homes in a day.

As we help Haitians get back on their feet with a structure that is pretty well earthquake resistant, also hopefully termite resistant, these are ways we can begin to address outside of government, working in partnership with government, some of the long-term needs of our Haitian brothers and sisters.

Is my colleague aware of any NGOs in his area that do similar projects? The more these kinds of initiatives are put together, possibly working in conjunction with each other, a synergy develops. Is he aware of any similar stories from his area?

● (2230)

**Mr. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, my community in Papineau is filled from La Perle Retrouvée to all the different organizations and individuals who are helping, who are offering their help, or filling containers with clothes. After the hurricanes, it was particularly noticeable. There was a huge amount of help, more help in many cases than Haitians knew what to do with. The logistics involved is often overwhelming.

S.O. 52

Canadians and people in Montreal and in my riding have been exceedingly generous with their thoughts, with their prayers and with their money as well to try to help Haiti.

That is an important piece of it. It will help through the short term. However, it is the difference between offering someone a fish and teaching them how to fish. We need to ensure we work with the Haitian people and the Haitian government to wean them off the need for constant intervention internationally and start building a strong and proud nation that we know Haitians deserve and Haitians can create.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was not sure whether the member was criticizing the government for not moving quick enough or whether he was making the statement, with which I would agree. As the member for Edmonton Centre said, slow sometimes can be better.

It is terrific that the government got the jump on this situation, that money has been collected, but we want to have things planned out because of the chaotic situation in which we find ourselves in that country and ensure we get good value for the dollar. Whether it is rebuilding with wood or whether it is rebuilding, as the previous member said, with a new type of construction as opposed—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have to stop the hon. member there to give the member for Papineau enough time to respond.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, there is a difficult challenge in getting the balance right. The difficulties are so great and the needs so pressing in the immediate, that, yes, we need to ensure we give every bit of concrete present help that we possibly can. However, we must do it in a way that we build the capacity for the long term and we get Haiti back on its feet so it has the strength of the robust infrastructure to make it through whatever the gods or nature chooses to throw at it in the coming years.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank and congratulate my colleague, the hon. member for Bourassa, for this important initiative. He has become a major expert on the situation in Haiti and, for that reason and many others, he is greatly respected and admired by Haitians, not only here in Canada but also in Haiti.

I would also like to recognize the work that the hon. member for Papineau has done for the Haitian community in Montreal. The hon. member for Papineau, the hon. member for Bourassa and I have many people from Haiti in our ridings. These are people of whom we are very fond.

I must say that I am somewhat familiar with Haiti having been there several times since 1994. It is a country for which I have a great deal of love and respect.

This emergency debate is completely necessary given the current situation in Haiti. We must gain a better understanding of and better define what is happening in Haiti. We must assess what the international community and Canada are doing on the ground, but we must also work together to determine areas in which we can improve.

What more can we do for Haiti, a country that has suffered so much and with which we have a very personal and even fraternal relationship?

Haiti has experienced difficulties throughout its history, and this year has been particularly cruel. It started with a devastating earthquake that ravaged the capital of Port-au-Prince and killed more than 250,000 men, women and children. The fallout was felt across the country. Add to that hundreds of thousands of injured and 1.5 million people who were displaced and left homeless. How many children were orphaned? We will probably never know the exact figure, but it is unimaginable.

The entire country was affected: its people, its infrastructure and even its political and organizational structure. The economic, political and human repercussions and consequences of this terrible tragedy are still frightfully evident today. I am thinking, for example, of the many displaced and homeless people who still do not have a permanent roof over their heads and who live in makeshift camps, not to mention the countless number of people and families who have been left with no income.

And now, more recently, there has been a public health catastrophe. I am obviously talking about the cholera epidemic that is sweeping the country. This epidemic has already killed more than 2,200 people and is endangering the lives of thousands of Haitians. On a more personal note, I can say that I have seen the effects of cholera in other parts of the world and they are absolutely devastating.

To top it all off, there is now a political crisis. We know that the country finds itself in a difficult situation and is in the throes of a major crisis because of the November elections, which were rife with irregularities. When the results of the first round of voting and the names of the two candidates who made it to the January 2011 run-off were announced, it sparked a wave of violence that has not subsided. Haitians do not believe that the election results reflect the ballots cast, their choice and their will.

This is ample justification for the emergency debate we are holding. It is urgent that we reflect, it is urgent that we understand, but even more importantly, it is urgent that we take action. It is clear that, if Canada, as well as the entire international community, does not immediately address this crisis, the Haitian people will face catastrophe on several fronts: epidemics, malnutrition, violence, and civil and political instability. We must work on all these fronts at the same time.

First of all, as we have said in the past and are saying again, it is imperative that the Canadian government immediately appoint a special envoy who will have both a political and diplomatic role among the local and international authorities in Haiti.

● (2235)

The hon. member for Bourassa has repeatedly expressed this hope, but we are still waiting.

More specifically, politically speaking, we need to work on fixing the democratic process as quickly as possible. Indeed, urgent action is needed.



We must also focus our efforts on other key stakeholders, in order to garner their support for a peaceful resolution to this crisis. In other words, we need to shake things up. We need to show leadership and urge our allies to get moving if we want our Haitian friends to progress peacefully.

There are many ways to resolve this crisis. That being said, whatever we do, we must respect the system in place as well as Haitian laws, from both a judicial and electoral standpoint.

We are all here this evening to figure out how we can help the electoral process in Haiti, and not to take the place of that country's decision makers.

We must look at how we can work together, but we must not try to take anyone's place. What is crucial in the long term is ensuring that this never happens again. We must work with the Haitian people, with institutions and other partners to ensure that the next time Haitians go to the polls, there will be appropriate monitoring and security measures in place to make the whole process transparent. We want to make sure the new president has a credible mandate and the legitimacy needed to govern. In other words, we need to learn from all of this in order to make sure it never happens again.

Regarding health, I also believe that CIDA needs to send an assessment team immediately to work directly on the ground, to talk to the people, to doctors and other authorities, in order to maximize the effectiveness of the aid being sent to stop the cholera epidemic.

There is one other important point. Some people have already pointed this out, and it bears repeating: we must absolutely ensure that the money makes it to organizations on the ground. That is absolutely essential. Canada has promised large sums of money to help Haiti, but so far it has allocated only part of that money. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been promised, but the money has not yet been allocated. This also needs to be corrected immediately.

Members may recall that the government made a number of announcements and promised hundreds of millions of dollar in aid. The Prime Minister and the ministers responsible for CIDA spoke about funds “distributed”—the terms are important here—and funds “promised”, but unfortunately, that is very different from the funds that have actually been delivered. It takes more than promises; it takes money on the ground. This confusion makes no sense when you see the generosity extended to Haiti by Canadians from across the country.

Lack of transparency is another serious problem. There has been some cloud or shadow, and we need to know a bit more in terms of how funds have been distributed. It is nearly impossible to find relevant information about Canada's priorities, planned expenditures or commitments in Haiti. Like everything else, this must be corrected.

As I said earlier, we have historic ties with Haiti. We are more than partners, we are friends—good friends, even—because we share common values and a language and we work together in institutions such as la Francophonie and others. And then there are the tens of thousands of Canadians of Haitian origin who are here. These people are an extraordinary addition to our society. Today they are part of Canada's social fabric.

*S.O. 52*

To conclude, I would like to say that I have had the opportunity to visit Haiti a number of times, and I know the strength, courage and determination of the Haitian people. These people have always been able to rise up and today they will rise once again. It is our duty to be there with them.

● (2240)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would refer the member to the Marshall Plan in Europe after the Second World War as an example of what can be done to achieve success. The countries got together and they were able to reconstruct the devastation from what was Europe at the time. Japan was totally reconstructed into a vibrant economy after being devastated by war.

There are examples of where things can improve. What are we doing wrong here? Are we expecting too much too quickly?

As I indicated, the government was on the file very early and we raised money but I do not think it is clear where all the money has gone or whether the money is finding its way to where it should.

Clearly these are issues, as the member indicated, that we need to sort out. It is about time something was organized here so that we can get a plan in place and one that works.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. Major funding is needed, but beyond that, monitoring and reporting mechanisms are also necessary.

Haiti will never be the same again after the terrible earthquake in January. Haiti needs to be reimagined. Our approach to Haiti needs to be reimagined to instil confidence not just in the Haitian people, but also in the international community. The Haitian people need to know that the international community is there at its side like a brother, but at the same time, that the promised money is being distributed effectively. That requires significant involvement by the Haitian authorities and Haitian civil society.

In closing, there will have to be better coordination on the part of the various stakeholders, whether we are talking about foreign countries or NGOs on the ground.

● (2245)

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the member for Honoré-Mercier on all his work and especially on his sensitivity not only to the Haitian community, but also to his whole community. I want him to share his expertise from the world of co-operation.

Like me, he travelled to Haiti, where that resilience could still be felt. When we saw a Haitian smile, we said he would make it, but since the events of January 12, the people seem to have been suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. They are very fragile, but they are also experiencing a crisis of confidence where their institutions are concerned.

I would like to hear what the member has to say about how we can find a solution to the current electoral situation.

S.O. 52

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent question. As he said, there is a crisis of confidence. In a way, the international community has to prove itself much like the Haitian institutions that are in place. Haiti has survived too many crises and has had too many problems related to democracy and the electoral process. This type of mistrust is therefore normal. We must show that we are there not to act as a substitute for anyone but to work hand in hand with Haitian partners and institutions.

I think that the example set by the NGOs is excellent. I had the opportunity to go to Haiti for the first time in 1994. I worked in international development for almost 10 years. I would say that the advantage that the NGOs have is their close relationship with the Haitian social activists, public and leaders, which allows them to develop a bond of trust. We can make big promises and contribute as much money as we want but it will not be enough without a relationship of trust. We have to start by building credibility and trust and the rest will follow.

[English]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his address this evening. I also thank other speakers tonight for their very insightful observations about the situation in Haiti. A number of them have been on the ground in Haiti and have had experience in that country. I have been to many countries over the years and some in that region but not in Haiti itself. Therefore, I cannot give an on the ground report as to how I saw the situation.

However, the country is a very poor country and has been for many years. When a country that does not have good resources and good infrastructure to begin with and then visit upon it a devastating earthquake, such as the one we saw last year, and, on top of that, the whole issue of political instability and the cholera outbreak, it is a recipe for a worsening disaster than what it currently has in its hands.

We have seen governments in the past respond to international tragedies that have occurred and all goes well for a little while when the issue is in the news and then it disappears from the news and we go on to another issue and the countries are left to fend for themselves. In this case, a lot of good has happened so far this year with Canadians responding in larger numbers than we have seen in many years and the government adding the matching funds idea, which I gather was not necessarily its idea. I think it has been tried before but it was a very well timed offer and as a result the government has indicated it has raised about \$400 million through that effort, which is very positive. Now the issue is how it should be allocated or spent.

I believe the member for Edmonton Centre said that we do not want to be quick about allocating the funds because we want to ensure we get full value for our dollar. One of the reasons we are having a harder time raising donations from the public in all sorts of different charitable efforts is that the public in some ways has questions about how the money is being spent. People would like to have some feedback on how their money is spent. This could be a very good test case. The government and the minister should take it upon themselves to issue a report on how things are going with the donations that people have made. If people who contributed \$100 or \$200 to aid were to get some feedback on precisely what happened

to their money, I think they would be much more willing to contribute once again the next year.

Given the magnitude of the problem and the fact that the situation in Haiti is getting worse, the proper approach would be for the Prime Minister to use his offices and his various channels to get world leaders to look at Haiti in the same way that the free world dealt with Europe and Japan after the Second World War. Every member in this chamber knows how much destruction there was in Europe and in Japan during the Second World War and yet, miracle of miracles, after the war we saw a full recovery in Europe and a recovery in Japan to the point where they became world powers in short order.

• (2250)

The question is, how did that come about? That came about with a concerted plan and, of course, a lot of money. The reconstruction of those devastated areas was done very successfully. Why do we not have the ability in this country collectively to replicate in a small way that experience?

In China there was an earthquake last year. I saw a CBC report, which I mentioned to the minister earlier today, where a Chinese official was giving a glowing report about Canada's participation in the reconstruction in China. The Chinese have a plan. Their plan is to reconstruct the buildings that I guess were built of brick and steel which were susceptible to collapse in earthquake conditions. The brick and steel are being replaced with Canadian lumber. To me that is a win-win situation. It will help us deal with our lumber issues. More important, on a long-term basis it will help the Chinese rebuild the cities that were devastated by the earthquake. When another earthquake comes about in the future, as it will, we will not be repeating the mistakes of the past.

A Conservative member talked about a church group that he is familiar with that has developed a new type of housing that they are looking at for the Haiti situation. I forget how he described the housing, but it certainly makes sense to me that it would be earthquake resistant and hurricane resistant. That is another liability the islands have in the Caribbean. For whatever it is costing them to put this housing together, that is a plus. To me, if it takes a few extra months to get it right and if we can rebuild in a smart way using best practices, then we are going to do well in the future.

Habitat for Humanity is very active. Former President Carter is involved in this. He has been involved in Habitat for Humanity in Winnipeg, rebuilding. I read all of the background information on the Haitian earthquake and it seems that almost every organization in the world is there. All of this is good because they can offer their expertise.

The question is, is anyone coordinating their efforts? Is there an overall plan? I am sure there is, it is just that I am not familiar with what overall plan would be.

The point is that we have to not only harness all those resources to get the job done and get it done right, but when stories come back to us out of the country about money that is stolen and misspent and construction that is done in a poor fashion, that is negative to our efforts for the future, because what happens is we lose support for the efforts we are trying to develop, in this case in Haiti.

S.O. 52

I know my colleagues mentioned earlier, because I read *Hansard*, that no solution is going to work without getting the Haitians involved. I do agree that we cannot force a solution on them, and now they are in a political upheaval.

● (2255)

We cannot let the situation deteriorate to the point where there is anarchy in the country. If we follow this through and there is a breakdown of authority in the country, then it will have to resort to a military situation. I do not think we want to go there. We are not headed on the right track. Why are we having this problem? My guess is that people are waiting for results.

I have seen some news reports that indicate people are still living in conditions similar to those in refugee camps. Perhaps they may be safer than they would be in their houses if there were to be aftershocks or another earthquake. However, it cannot be a healthy situation for people to live there on a long-term basis.

The member who made the request for an emergency debate tonight was absolutely correct in his assessment of what needs to be done. It is important that we involve ourselves in the debate this evening. The question is what the final resolution will be out of the debate. If we simply have a debate and nothing happens afterward, then we have not really solved the problem.

I would have preferred to hear more concrete suggestions as to what should be done in this situation. It would have been good to have some sort of plan put forward by the Liberal Party, as a Liberal member made the request for the emergency debate. Maybe some option should have been given to the government as to where we should go from here.

Has the matching funds program run its course? I am not sure. I asked the member for the statistics and he gave them to me as best he could, but I do not know if the matching funds are still coming in or whether the program is finished. People are not thinking about it any more and have ceased donating.

What will be the status of the matching funds next year? Even though the situation might be as bad or even worse next year, are we looking at essentially no matching funds? As far as the people of Canada are concerned, it is already a past issue. It is a year old. They have given their \$100 or \$200 and have got their tax receipts. They have done their bit.

Where are the people in Haiti going to be one year down the road? Where are they going to be two years down the road? Are we simply perpetuating a situation that has existed for a long time and providing a band-aid solution? I have not heard any solutions yet from members of the opposition or the government. It has been more of an information gathering exercise to get an update as to where things are.

I want to indicate concern for the cholera outbreak. I am always interested when my hon. colleague from the Liberal Party participates in debates. I cannot remember her riding. She sponsored a debate recently on multiple sclerosis. She makes excellent speeches. I know she has been concerned about this issue as well

● (2300)

With the cholera outbreak on top of all the other problems in the country right now, this is not a very good situation. We have to get on top of that. The construction can wait a bit, but the cholera outbreak should be job one at this point. It has to be dealt with on a priority basis. Perhaps that is where the emphasis should be, that we deal with the cholera outbreak. We try to deal with the political instability there and get through that. Regarding the long term, I believe the minister is meeting with Hillary Clinton as we speak in Quebec and perhaps they will be addressing this issue. Perhaps they should be looking at a longer term solution in terms of major reconstruction.

We have to recognize that the world has been hit with a huge recession in the last couple of years. There are economies in Europe, such as Iceland, declaring bankruptcy. Ireland is in bad shape, as are Portugal, Greece and Spain. The United States is not in very healthy condition either. It might be a tough sell to be pushing a new version of the Marshall plan on these leaders at this point.

In the case of the Great Depression, members will know that the world economy languished in recession and depression for 10 years until a war started. All of a sudden there was a war and we were out of recession because we were building armaments and out shooting one another again. Maybe what is needed is a war, but a new type of war, a war on poverty. We could certainly start with Haiti's situation and put resources into Haiti to redevelop the country.

It brings me to another point. I have been in Mexico and Cuba many times over the years, and I can say that constructing buildings in Mexico or Cuba is not the same as building them in Winnipeg or Ottawa. In Winnipeg or Ottawa, buildings need a lot of insulation because of the very cold weather. In countries like Cuba and Haiti, they do not have that problem of having to build the buildings to deal with cold temperatures. My guess is that the construction costs on a per unit basis are very low when we are dealing with countries like those.

I think the minister is nodding but my eyesight is not what it used to be, so I cannot tell for sure whether he is nodding in agreement, but the costs are just not there in the same way they are in the northern climates. I do not know what the cost is for putting up mass units in these countries, especially when the profit motive is taken out of it. China has certainly been active, for example, in Cuba. The Chinese, in the last few years, brought brand new fridges into Cuba and basically delivered them to people's houses by the thousands. It was part of China's foreign aid program.

When we look at it on a non-profit basis, we look at where it is, we look at mass production, it seems to me that we should be getting a lot better value for our dollar than we apparently have been getting in the past.

● (2305)

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to the question from the NDP member, I will give a little clarification in reference to the matching funds he was talking about.

S.O. 52

The matching funds program was for a duration of time and it has already expired. There is no other program that the Government of Canada has for matching funds. However, for the member's information, he can always donate to the Canadian NGOs working in Haiti and ask Canadians to donate to them for the excellent effort they are doing. The matching fund program is over.

Secondly, I think there needs to be some clarification on the money that has been pledged and the international effort that is there. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, the minister for CIDA and the American Secretary of State have said that this money needs to go through the reconstruction commission. In turn, it works with the Government of Haiti to identify the projects on the ground.

I do understand the frustration of everyone, and our frustration, that the process has slowed down due to the elections. We need to really push that program. Yes, the money is there, the effort is there, but the point is to push the Government of Haiti and the electorate to expedite the reconstruction process.

• (2310)

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for clarifying the points. I assumed that the matching funds program was over.

The fact is that when we are dealing with organizations, for example, Habitat for Humanity, I am not certain whether they go into a country and actually build the buildings on their own or whether they have to pre-clear through organizations. I am sure that is what it is.

I think that is a concern for a lot of people. They are reluctant to believe that there is an efficiency in giving the money over to another organization who then gives it over to another organization. At the end of the day, there is no report back as to what we got for our money or a proper accounting. I wish that could be the case.

It seems to me the best way to do it would be to have individual organizations like Habitat for Humanity go in and complete its whole project without going through intermediaries. At that point we would know that we were getting full value for our money, knowing Habitat for Humanity's record in this field.

That would be my observation, but the member and the minister would know better than I as to what the proprieties and rules are in dealing with situations like this and whether everything must go through a central authority.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech which, in my opinion, was more a series of questions than an actual speech.

He referred to the Hansard, which he read just before arriving for the debate. I would like to know which document he was referring to because had he carefully read the debates that occurred just before he arrived, he would have noted that not only did the member from Bourassa move a motion for an emergency debate, but he also provided the government with various options. Naturally, it is not up to us today, as we speak, to determine what the government will decide to do and what Haiti must do. At present, we are making

suggestions and my colleague from Bourassa made many. Quite a few others were made by various colleagues.

Therefore, I will return the question to my colleague. He had many questions. But does he have suggestions about what should be done with respect to the current electoral process? How can the crisis be resolved?

[English]

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, on two occasions I have dealt with that issue. I have said very clearly that I think we should be looking at a version of the Marshall plan where the world leaders got together to look at what worked to reconstruct Europe and Japan after the devastation of the second world war, if we are really serious about dealing with the problem.

We have been dealing with band-aid solutions, incremental solutions, not only with regard to this particular situation, but others for many years. If we were to look at best practices and examples of what actually works, then we could look at the Marshall plan. It was something that did turn Europe and Japan around after the devastation of the war. If it worked in those situations, why can we not at least look at in a situation like this?

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right. There is no excuse for allowing Haiti's cholera disaster to escalate. Aid workers have tried to bring the outbreak under control but the disease continues to rage, especially in rural areas. The United Nations last week said that the death and infection tolls could be twice as high as officially reported. David Schrupf who leads the Médecins Sans Frontières outreach teams in the north reports, "We often see only the tip of the iceberg as we know there are people who are dying from cholera in the rural communities".

A Canadian doctor down there operates a clinic that has been operating 24 hours a day since November 22 because nearby hospitals are unable to handle all the cholera patients in the area. She says:

We are trying to get some beds, because right now we have patients basically on benches.... We are just struggling to get by, really it's a day-to-day thing.

What recommendations might my colleague make to the government in order to try to address this issue in rural areas?

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, since I listen to and rely on the hon. member for solutions to problems like this, I think she is in a better position to provide answers than I am.

As I have said before, this is a very serious problem, probably the most serious problem in Haiti. The citizens can wait a bit longer for construction projects and new infrastructure and so on, but they cannot wait for help to deal with a devastating cholera outbreak.

I am certain my colleague could tell me better, but I am sure that cholera is just one of the things that can happen. Other types of diseases are probably associated with it, so that if we let the cholera outbreak follow its natural course there will be another outbreak of something else, which will cause even more devastation.

We have to deal with problem number one right now, which is the cholera outbreak, and once we get that under control then we can worry about the political instability and the reconstruction efforts. There are ways to deal with the other issues, but the cholera situation is very disturbing and has to be dealt with right away.

That member is probably the best member in the entire House to understand these types of issues and explain the problem to people and tell them how to deal with it.

● (2315)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I asked my colleague a very specific question about the current political crisis and he is talking about the Marshall plan. The Marshall plan is not a response to Haiti's democratic crisis. The Marshall plan is a medium- and long-term solution, while the current political crisis is real and immediate. I would simply like to know if the member has solutions for overcoming Haiti's current democratic, political and constitutional crisis.

[English]

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, questions are coming from a member of a party that cannot even get its own leadership to act in any concerted and consistent effort. That party has gone through a couple of leaders in the last couple of years.

I have given you answers to what has to happen in terms of reconstruction. I have given you answers with regard to the cholera outbreak, and certainly in terms of the political situation the government has to be—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. member is out of time. I will remind him to address his comments through the chair and not directly at his colleagues.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is regrettable that the situation in Haiti surfaces, or resurfaces, and touches the Canadian conscience only when there is a situation of crisis.

In that regard I want to commend my colleague, the member for Bourassa, for his constancy and commitment over the years. He has not just spoken at a time of clear and compelling crisis, but he has been there through the years, sounding the alarm, alerting us to what is happening in Haiti, calling upon us to mobilize our resources and the conscience of the international community in that regard.

Even before the earthquake that devastated Haiti, the cholera epidemic and the turbulent elections in its wake, Haiti was not only the poorest country in the western hemisphere by a significant margin, it was one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world.

Moreover Haiti, in recent years, has struggled with problems, whether they be ongoing political upheavals, health crises, severe environmental degradation, or an annual barrage of hurricanes that wiped out most of the country's food crops, destroying its irrigation system and causing acute hunger for millions, even before the devastation of the earthquake.

The deforestation and over-farming left much of Haiti eroded and barren, undermining its citizens' farming efforts, driving up food

*S.O. 52*

prices and leaving the country even more vulnerable to natural disasters, let alone the earthquake, again, in its wake. Its long history of political instability and corruption only added to the turmoil.

Accordingly, and this must always be appreciated, the member for Bourassa was warning us about all of these matters, before the earthquake, before the cholera epidemic, before the turbulence in the political culture. He warned us that Haiti faced significant developmental challenges that we ought to have been addressing all these years.

Even before the earthquake, et cetera, fewer than 30% of Haitians had access to electricity, with roughly half of the users tapping into the national grid illegally. There were longstanding problems with garbage and solid waste removal. Clogged canals presented serious and recurring risks of flooding. In a word, it is a hard to separate what is due to the poverty and hunger levels that predated the earthquake, and what is due to the earthquake and the cholera epidemic, which followed in its wake.

Approximately 80% of the people in this country lived on less than \$2 a day even before the earthquake. It was that abject poverty, that hunger, that desolation that we had not been properly addressing and redressing before all of the recent calamities that have occurred and brought us to this emergency debate this evening.

Accordingly, the enormous difficulties that have confronted Haiti for decades have only been compounded by the devastation of the earthquake, the cholera outbreak and the turbulence of the election, which have added a sense of urgency to the critical issues that were there before but which taken together have the potential to derail efforts to rebuild the country and to address and alleviate the human suffering.

We are now in a serious crisis, and if we do not act immediately this crisis can begin to spiral out of control in many sectors and on many levels.

In summary, there are some 11 critical challenges that confront the international community in trying to suggest a framework for action for the rebuilding of the country, one that will help provide us an identification of the priorities so that we can move forward in concert with the resilience of the Haitian people.

● (2320)

The Haitians are a resilient and courageous people who have, regrettably, been plagued by terrible leadership, natural disasters and all that we have heard this evening, but a resilient people who, given the opportunity, can address and redress the human suffering that has befallen and besets them.

## S.O. 52

I will now go through some of these critical challenges at this point. First, one needs to establish a comprehensive rebuilding strategy and a set of priorities. While the Haitian government's action plan for a national recovery and development represented a good start, frankly, Haitians need, are waiting for and are asking for concrete guidance on everything from where displaced persons can resettle, to how the educational system will be rebuilt, to what the nature is of economic decentralization and private sector investment. Fundamentally, they want to know how they will be able to earn a living, how they will send their children to school, how they will be able to access health services and how they will deal with the daily emergencies that are besetting them as we meet.

Second, this also means building leadership and capacity in the government of Haiti. However, as I say this, we need to appreciate, as is well known and mentioned this evening, that the government of Haiti was decimated by the earthquake. It has lost civil servants, senior leaders and most of the ministry buildings. In other words, having lost so much of its own personnel in the earthquake, the government of Haiti finds itself with a limited capacity.

However, Haitians need to be reassured that their government can begin the rebuilding process in a cohesive fashion and execute a well thought out plan, underpinned by the presence of the international community, by the presence of the Canadian government in concert with other governments and the international community and with the local and international NGOs, some 10,000 of whom are there right now doing humanitarian work, helping out in matters of health, shelter building and the like.

Third, we need to empower the Haitian recovery commission. Simply put, the commission does represent an opportunity to change the way one can do business in Haiti. One can establish an expert teams-based approach that helps build a political consensus, but it will not be able to do it alone and will require the resources that have been referenced this evening by my colleagues, the member for Honoré-Mercier, the member for Bourassa and the like.

Fourth, we need to address the resettlement issue. The hundreds of thousands of Haitians trapped in temporary or informal settlements is a major recovery issue. We need to offer solutions for moving displaced people out of the dozens of tent cities that have cropped up. There is land available but land tenure issues and other complications need to be resolved. The longer Haitians continue to live in makeshift camps, the harder it will be to reintegrate them into communities and to take down the camps.

Fifth, we need to build democratic governments and legitimacy. There is a crisis of confidence, of trust and of morale, as my colleagues have mentioned this evening. At this point what is so necessary is to have a legitimate and authentic democratically elected government in order to lay a strong and sustainable foundation for Haiti's future.

Canada can play an important role here, an important monitoring role and an important advocacy role in ensuring that a forthcoming election can be democratically held with appropriate security, with proper training and with the identification of three person candidates, because that may be what is needed, as was referenced earlier this evening, at this point.

Sixth, donors need to speak with one voice and improve coordination. There is too much fragmentation in the donor community and too much disagreement with the necessary aid not necessarily reaching the required recipient.

That leads me to my seventh point, which is that there is a need to coordinate Canadian government assistance efforts with other governments, with the network of donors, with the United Nations and with the government of Haiti's own development framework lest the overlaps, the redundancies and the dysfunction prevent the aid from reaching the desired recipients and targets. As my colleagues have put it, oversight and accountability are essential mechanisms in that regard where the Canadian government can play an important role for that purpose.

● (2325)

With regard to our own involvement here, we have yet to deliver with respect to the aid that has been promised. We have yet to provide the necessary transparency with regard to the aid that needs to be delivered.

Close to a month ago the Liberal Party called for urgent action to confront the cholera crisis in Haiti, calling on the government to deploy emergency strategic support team to do a rapid assessment of where the disaster assistance response team, DART, should be offered, calling for the urgent delivery of aid money, calling for the appointment of a Canadian special envoy and calling for the immediate deployment of a CIDA assessment team to see how we could improve our response to the cholera epidemic.

Such a team could work in close communication with the strategic support team of DART and Canada could mobilize the international community, working with other international players to support the effort here that desperately needs to be put in place, because the time is urgent and regrettably and tragically the crisis is now.

Eight, we need to rebuild Haiti's decimated civil service. The bureaucracy and civil service suffered as we know a triple blow from the earthquake. Almost all the ministry buildings were damaged or destroyed due to their proximity to the epicentre of the earthquake. Huge numbers of civil servants were themselves killed in the course of the earthquake. As of today, most ministries are operating out of makeshift offices including tents. Computer systems are not functioning, electricity is threadbare and basic supplies are hard to come by.

In a word, the civil service has to be rebuilt. The delivery systems for delivering all that is needed in all the sectors to which I have referred must be rebuilt and mobilized and Canada has a role to play in this regard.

Nine, we need to maintain the security gains. Right before the earthquake struck security in fact was one of the success stories in the country, with neighbourhoods such as Cité Soleil having gained significant stability. Regrettably, recently, as we know, not only has security become more difficult, not only is there an increase in gang violence, but it has now become vital that the international community join together with the Haitian government to build the capacity of the Haitian national police and the key justice sector reforms to be advanced in order to confront prison abuses, indefinite pretrial detentions and human rights abuses.

As well, continued international support for the United Nations stabilization mission in Haiti is essential, though the international community must ensure that this United Nations stabilization mission is not itself over taxed in such a way that we defer to it matters which we have to undertake ourselves in order to ensure the job gets done.

Ten, we need to bring the broader Haitian community into the rebuilding process. It is crucial that Haitian civil society and those outside the governmental process participate in the reconstruction of Haiti. Rebuilding the country must not be politicized, but should be an inclusive process that attempts to build an equal and responsible and accessible society.

The government of Haiti must embrace civil society and Haitian non-governmental organizations and the private sector must be part of the rebuilding process. Without a broader inclusion of Haitian stakeholders, the formation of what has sometimes been referred to, and one could speak of this much more, before the recent earthquake, the cholera epidemic, the turbulent election, one spoke then of reimagining Haiti. I am not saying that so much now of reimagining Haiti. I think we now have to speak of saving Haiti and we have to mobilize all the resources for that purpose.

● (2330)

Finally, health concerns must be a priority lest the lack of making health a priority undermine the rebuilding efforts to which I have been referring, thereby eroding morale, trust, credibility and effectiveness. We need urgent action to confront the cholera epidemic, just as we need urgent action to confront the cross-section of health-related problems in Haiti.

Eleven months after the earthquake, Haiti is at a crossroads. It is faced with challenges in many areas: infrastructure, resettlement, job creation, education, health, environment, justice, security, and of course, democratic government and legitimacy. It must confront all these challenges with a necessarily reduced capacity because of the earthquake and the related devastation.

It is essential that Canada, the United Nations and the international community, including the international donor community, improve their involvement, their coordination and their relationship with the Haitian government and people so that an under-resourced Haitian government, together with a resilient Haitian people, can make the important policy decisions that need to be made, and together with that resilient, patient people, can begin to alleviate the human suffering lest the kinds of crises that I have been describing begin to bring us into the area of catastrophe.

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment my

*S.O. 52*

hon. colleague for a very thoughtful presentation, for an effective summary of the succession of man-made and natural disasters that have brutalized Haiti and Haitian society over the decades. I would also compliment my hon. colleague for his list of suggestions, suggestions that have been made in different forms by other colleagues on both sides of the House tonight and that all are worthy in their form.

I would remind my colleague, though, that at the Montreal conference shortly after the earthquake it was decided and there was consensus among the international community, NGOs and the Government of Haiti that the United Nations would be the coordinating body but that all final decisions would be made by the representatives of the people of Haiti, effectively the government of Haiti.

It is true that this year the succession of disasters on top of the earthquake disaster, the heavy rains, the cholera epidemic and now this election violence, each of these compounding the tragedy of the event before it, have left the Haitian people in, as the member properly described, a tragic situation, an even deeper tragedy than a year ago.

There is no shortage of money at hand, as the international community, with Canadians leading the way, has shared its charity in historic proportion, but the problem has been with the assignment of land, land title, the problems of rubble clearance, and reassignment of property for industries, any number of which are waiting in Canada to engage in housing. I wonder whether my colleague is suggesting that perhaps we should revisit the decision-making and implementation process with more forceful intervention by the international community.

● (2335)

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Speaker, I would agree with my colleague, as he first enunciated it as a matter of general principle, that we must first turn to the Haitian government, and in particular the Haitian people, but we need to be there for them and we need to be there with a sense of urgency. We need to do this with a sense of coordination, because right now we are lacking that coordination, and rather, witnessing fragmentation as between intergovernmental assistance, the role of the UN and the role of state actors, NGOs and the like. We need an overall coordinated effort, and I believe Canada can help in that overall coordination in respect of the identification of principles and priorities to help alleviate the human suffering.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity, as the debate is drawing to a close, to thank all members on both sides of the House. This debate has been very useful and constructive. It has given everyone the opportunity to propose some concrete solutions that will allow the government and Canada to speak with a single, united voice. I personally thought it was important to send a message to the people of Haiti to let them know that we have not forgotten them and we are here for them. It was important to have this kind of debate.

## S.O. 52

I have a question for my colleague, who once again, with his great depth and expertise, has demonstrated just how important these debates are. I wonder if he could comment on two things. First of all, how important is it for Canada to appoint a special envoy who could work full time to liaise with the international community and Haitian authorities. Second, in the context of the current election crisis, how could the international community become involved in the process while still respecting the sovereignty of a country and not interfering, all in an effort to create a positive environment in order to introduce democracy in Haiti?

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the idea of having a special envoy. There needs to be someone on the ground who can set priorities and provide humanitarian and other assistance.

Now, I will briefly summarize the four priorities in Haiti's national action plan. That can be a starting point for us. First, there is the whole issue of infrastructure, urban development and so on. Second, there are all the economic issues. Third, there are social issues such as education, health and so forth. The last priority concerns democratic governance, which also means justice, security, public administration and all essential institutions.

I think Canada can be a leader in working toward these four priorities and setting the policies to achieve them.

● (2340)

[English]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague is the last speaker and the debate is coming to an end, may I take this opportunity to thank the member for Bourassa for requesting this emergency debate to discuss the serious issue of Haiti.

I will take the opportunity to thank everyone from the opposite side who talked about the situation in Haiti. As I said, we are all in agreement that there is a need to do things for Haiti. We will be

working together in the future toward ensuring that the things happening there are addressed jointly.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my ministers, including the Minister of International Cooperation and the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs for the Americas, and everyone who took part in the debate.

Again, I am thankful to the member for bringing this issue up and I hope everyone will work together to address the situation.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Speaker, since I am the last person and effectively have benefited from that which has been said by my colleagues, particularly those still remaining as this debate now comes to a close, I just hope we do not come together only for an emergency debate and then leave this chamber and hope that somehow the emergency resolves itself without our participation, leadership and engagement.

We need to look at the question of Haiti not as something that strikes our conscience whenever an emergency arises, such as an earthquake, a cholera outbreak, hurricane devastation and the like, but we need to address the underlying concerns that cause the devastation that brought about such suffering from the earthquake, the cholera epidemic and the like.

We need to address immediately the political turbulence that has arisen with respect to the election and we have to come together as a Canadian government, as a Canadian community, with the international community to address the particular compelling concerns of democratic government and legitimacy, health issues and the whole gamut of priorities that I sought to identify, together with my colleagues, this evening.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There being no further members rising for debate, I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:44 p.m.)







# CONTENTS

Monday, December 13, 2010

## EMERGENCY DEBATE

### Situation in Haiti

Mr. Coderre .....	7169
Motion .....	7169
Mr. Obhrai .....	7170
Mr. Dewar .....	7170
Ms. Neville .....	7171
Mr. Obhrai .....	7172
Mr. Dewar .....	7172
Mr. Cannon .....	7172
Mr. Coderre .....	7174
Mr. Dewar .....	7175
Ms. Deschamps .....	7175
Mr. Obhrai .....	7177
Mr. Dewar .....	7178
Mr. Dewar .....	7178
Mr. Obhrai .....	7179
Mr. Coderre .....	7179
Mr. Mulcair .....	7180
Mr. Obhrai .....	7181
Mr. Coderre .....	7181
Ms. Oda .....	7181
Mr. Coderre .....	7183
Mrs. Boucher .....	7183
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North) .....	7184
Mr. Pearson .....	7185
Ms. Oda .....	7186
Mr. Obhrai .....	7187
Mr. Pacetti .....	7187

## Message from the Senate

### Situation in Haiti

Motion .....	7189
Mr. Obhrai .....	7189
Mr. Goldring .....	7189
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North) .....	7190
Mr. St-Cyr .....	7191
Mr. Kent .....	7191
Mr. Maloway .....	7192
Mr. Hawn .....	7193
Mr. St-Cyr .....	7193
Mr. Maloway .....	7195
Mr. Hawn .....	7196
Mr. Obhrai .....	7196
Mr. Maloway .....	7197
Mr. Trudeau .....	7197
Mr. Hawn .....	7198
Mr. Trudeau .....	7198
Mr. Albrecht .....	7199
Mr. Maloway .....	7200
Mr. Rodriguez .....	7200
Mr. Maloway .....	7201
Mr. Coderre .....	7201
Mr. Maloway .....	7202
Mr. Obhrai .....	7203
Mr. Rodriguez .....	7204
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North) .....	7204
Mr. Cotler .....	7205
Mr. Kent .....	7207
Mr. Coderre .....	7207
Mr. Obhrai .....	7208

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