



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, April 21, 2010**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 21, 2010

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1400)

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### KICKBALLS FOR KIDS

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Chris Thompson of Stonewall, Manitoba is an example of what young Canadians can do to improve the lives of others.

After a 14-year career with his local soccer team, Stonewall United, Chris decided to bring the joy of playing soccer to children in the poorest regions of Africa. Last year he started his own charity called Kickballs for Kids, which donates soccer balls to kids in African countries who cannot afford them. He is completing a tour of several African nations where he has distributed the soccer balls paid for from funds he has raised.

While a \$10 soccer ball might not seem like a big investment for the average Canadian, it is a luxury for many in the developing world. Chris has sent home countless stories of the joy experienced by children and their communities started by a game of soccer made possible with one of his soccer balls.

Chris Thompson has demonstrated what a young Canadian can do to help those in need. More importantly, he has shown that the joy of sport can bring a community together, whether one lives on the Manitoba prairie or on the African savannah.

I encourage all Canadians to help Chris in this endeavour. They can find out more by visiting Kickballs for Kids on Facebook. I congratulate Chris.

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate if not outright dishonest if this House did not underline the fact that today is international Administrative Professionals Day.

Too often, secretaries and administrative assistants are overlooked and their important work taken for granted. As I am sure all my colleagues know, administrative professionals often form the backbone of an office, literally holding it together. Without them, most organizations would simply not function.

[*Translation*]

Administrative Professionals Day provides the House of Commons with the opportunity to acknowledge the vital support provided by these employees to MPs and also to society in general.

In the contemporary economy, where services are omnipresent and information evolves rapidly, administrative professionals are vital to the proper functioning of society.

It is therefore appropriate to acknowledge their work, which all too often is still taken for granted. A very big thank you to the administrative professionals of Canada.

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## VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, to no one's surprise, the Conservative government has announced that it will vote against Bill C-343, which provides real, tangible financial assistance to the families of victims of crime.

The government, which loudly proclaims that it defends victims and their families, is instead creating a diversion by holding Victims of Crime Awareness Week. We cannot oppose virtue. However, this gesture is simply a smokescreen for the Conservatives' inaction and indifference towards the financial needs of victims' families. The truth is that it is the awareness of this government's members that needs to be raised.

If the Conservatives truly were concerned by the fate of victims and their families, they would vote for Bill C-343 on April 28.

*Statements by Members*

• (1405)  
[English]

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to two outstanding women who have contributed immensely to British Columbia and Canada.

Madeleine Dion Stout has been a towering presence in the area of health care for decades. She has served as president of the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada and is an inaugural board member of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. She helped build the PHSA indigenous cultural competency program and the B.C. Women's Hospital's aboriginal health program. She is a director of the Women's Health Research Institute and just joined the First Nations Health Society as a board member.

Ms. Stout has just won a 2010 National Aboriginal Achievement Award for her outstanding contributions to aboriginal health and a strong public health system, an award she justly deserves.

Gladys Radek is a woman who is a passionate and tenacious voice for the missing and murdered women of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and across British Columbia. She has organized marches, raised funds and is a powerful advocate for the need to remember these women and obtain justice for each and every one of them. Her work has been so effective that this government recognized the group, Sisters in Spirit, in its throne speech.

I ask all members to join me in honouring these incredible women.

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[Translation]

**MS WALK**

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on April 25, the 5th annual MS Walk in Chaudière—Appalaches will be held in Lévis. The purpose of this walk is to raise money for research to find a cure for multiple sclerosis.

Multiple sclerosis is the most predominant neurological disease in young adults in our country and it has an impact on families, friends and the community. It is unpredictable and affects vision, hearing, memory, balance and mobility. Its physical, emotional and financial effects last a lifetime.

Every day, three new cases are diagnosed in Canada and women are three times more likely than men to develop this insidious disease in the prime of their lives.

I encourage each and every one of us to take part in one of the 160 walks being held across the country and I invite everyone here to join us this Sunday at 10 a.m. at the congress centre in Lévis.

Together we can beat multiple sclerosis.

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[English]

**AFGHANISTAN**

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us consider accountability on the Afghan detainee issue.

When allegations were made, the government attacked those who gave evidence. Is that the reaction we would expect from someone who has nothing to hide?

When parliamentarians raised concerns, they were accused of being unpatriotic. Does that mean we must ignore our international obligations in order to be patriotic?

When documents were requested by Parliament, the government hired a former judge to do a study instead of finding a solution compatible with the powers of Parliament.

Delay, denial and deception are incompatible with accountability. It is time for the government to be accountable by agreeing to a resolution which ensures both compliance with international law and full protection of our military. Now, that is patriotic.

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**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today the IMF forecasted that Canada will lead the G7 in growth this year and next. This follows an OECD report which also said that Canada will lead the G7 in growth. What is more, since July 2009 Canada has created almost 180,000 new jobs. All of this is proof that Canada's economic action plan is working.

However, the global economic recovery remains fragile and our top priority must be to stay the course.

What is the Liberals' top priority? It is to kill jobs with a GST hike, a new carbon tax and increase business taxes. In case the Liberals' agenda was unclear, the Liberal finance critic cleared up any confusion when he said, "The era of tax cuts is over".

While the Liberals plot new tax hikes, our Conservative government will continue to lower taxes and create jobs.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**USE OF WOOD IN FEDERAL BUILDINGS**

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today, members of the House of Commons will be voting on Bill C-429 on the use of wood in the construction and renovation of federal buildings.

A number of countries such as France, Norway and Sweden have implemented similar measures to promote the use of wood in public buildings. Quebec and British Columbia also have policies to that effect. Yesterday, the National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion in support of Bill C-429.

*Statements by Members*

A number of Quebec and Canadian associations representing thousands of groups have also expressed their support for the bill, including the Forest Products Association of Canada, the Quebec Wood Export Bureau and the Québec Forest Industry Council.

We have the means to move forward with this type of measure. That is why I hope we can count on the support of all hon. members in this House.

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• (1410)

**NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK**

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in celebration of National Volunteer Week. I would particularly like to highlight the invaluable contribution of young volunteers in Quebec and across Canada.

Every year, more than 12 million Canadians collectively volunteer more than 2 billion hours to make their communities and our country a better place to live.

What is remarkable is that young people, aged 15 to 24, have the highest rate of volunteerism. The Conservative government is very appreciative of the contribution of young volunteers. That is why Canada's economic action plan includes grants for the YMCA and other organizations, to place youth in internships with not-for-profit organizations. We also decided to create the Prime Minister's award for volunteerism.

Whether these young people are teaching computer basics to seniors, coaching kids' sports or planting trees in our communities, Canadians and Quebecers appreciate their contribution.

We thank everyone who volunteers their time.

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[English]

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today a group of representatives from the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation have come to the Hill in the hope of meeting with the Prime Minister or the Minister of Indian Affairs, who have refused to meet with them in the past.

The Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation is located principally in western Quebec and eastern Ontario. Members of that nation were the first inhabitants of the land on which we built our national Parliament, the very land on which we stand today.

[Translation]

Over the years, we have learned to live together on this earth, and it is simply unacceptable that the government is refusing to even listen to what these aboriginal representatives have to say. It will therefore be up to parliamentarians to meet with them and give them the opportunity to be heard that they are entitled to expect.

These people legitimately represent our constituents, and the Conservatives' behaviour is quite simply disrespectful.

[English]

**LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, guess who is at it again, calling for higher taxes? That is right, it is the Liberal leader and his right-hand man, the member for Markham—Unionville. Yesterday he told the media he wanted to end tax cuts. Translation: If people and their families want less money in their pockets and want to pay higher and higher taxes, the Liberal leader is their man.

Whether it is touting a carbon tax, GST hikes or job-killing business taxes, the Liberal leader and his party have never met a tax they did not like. He even wants to tax iPods.

While Conservatives work to deliver lower taxes for Canadians, the Liberal leader continues to find new ways to increase taxes.

Canadians know that higher taxes kill jobs. Once again, the Liberal leader is not in it for Canadians. He is just in it for himself.

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**EARTHQUAKE IN CHINA**

**Mrs. Alice Wong (Richmond, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on April 14, an earthquake of 7.1 magnitude struck Yushu, a town in the Qinghai province of China. As of today, the death toll has climbed to 2,183 and 84 people are still missing. A week after the devastating quake, the Chinese government has designated today a national day of mourning for earthquake victims.

On behalf of Richmond, I express my deepest condolences to the victims and their families during this difficult time. China is a strong nation and has responded to this disaster quickly and effectively. The country's relief efforts have demonstrated its fine tradition of offering help to those in need.

We sincerely hope that those affected by the earthquake can overcome the tragedy quickly and rebuild their hometowns. Our officials in Beijing continue to contact appropriate Chinese authorities to assess the assistance that is required.

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**ARMENIA**

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, 95 years ago, the world remained silent as over 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children were murdered. Just a few years ago, the House passed a motion clearly stating the truth and condemning this act as a crime against humanity.

[Translation]

The New Democrats stand in solidarity with the Armenian community in its desire to acknowledge and commemorate one of the most terrible chapters in world history. Hitler's infamous words, "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" remind us of our duty to remember and to insist that these historic realities be recognized for what they were; otherwise, these horrors could be repeated elsewhere.

*Oral Questions*

We also acknowledge the relentless courage of the Armenian people which, generations later, finally led to the creation of a free and democratic country. This country works with its neighbours to create a future of peace and reconciliation.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

**ARMENIA**

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, 95 years ago the Armenian people were victims of the first genocide of the 20th century. More than a million people were murdered.

Even though many countries have recognized the facts, the descendants of victims of this tragic event are still waiting for all nations to acknowledge this act of evil.

As we have seen numerous times over the years, Armenians must continue to fight and defend themselves against false accusations which are perpetuated in order to avoid accepting the truth about this genocide.

That is why we, the Bloc Québécois, continue to stand by them in their quest for justice.

*[Member spoke in Armenian.]*

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**ARMENIA**

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is a poignant time, a time to remember, to commemorate and to bear witness.

*[English]*

On the 95th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, which the House has recognized, scholars have documented and the anguished testimony of survivors has affirmed, the whole reminding us of the dangers of indifference and inaction in the face of incitement and mass atrocity, of the dangers of a culture of impunity and of the dangers of revisionism and denial that led Hitler to remark, as he embarked on the Nazi genocide, “who today remembers the Armenians?”

We remember, we bear witness and, as we say on occasions such as these, *jamais plus*, never again.

*[Translation]*

Never again for the Armenians and never again for anyone.

\* \* \*

*[English]*

**ARMENIA**

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today as chair of the Canada-Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group to remember the Armenian genocide of 1915.

It is important not only to honour the memory of those who died or simply to acknowledge what has passed but also to understand that the recognition of these tragic events can be a starting point to move forward and improve relationships and understanding between present day Turkey and Armenia.

The Armenian genocide was recognized by the Senate in 2002, by this House in 2004 and first commemorated by the Government of Canada in 2006.

The Armenian Canadian community has contributed greatly to Canada's culture and economy. I applaud its efforts to acknowledge its past while looking forward to the future to build bridges based on mutual respect.

By recognizing and remembering the Armenian genocide, we should all be motivated to do everything in our power to ensure that such a terrible tragedy never happens again.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

*[English]*

### FIREARMS REGISTRY

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, one of the Prime Minister's members of Parliament insulted police chiefs across Canada. He called them a cult and he accused them of corruption all because they support a gun registry that we believe is a vital tool to keep our communities safe and our police officers safe.

Will the Prime Minister now rise in this place and apologize to police chiefs on behalf of the government and will he condemn those disgraceful remarks?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member of Parliament in question immediately said that those remarks were not acceptable. He apologized for them and, in fact, the staffer in question has actually resigned.

The truth of the matter and the real problem here is that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to change his own position. He is the one who said:

No sensible Canadian thinks the problem is the shotgun on the barn door. No sensible Canadian thinks the problem is the target shooter or the legitimate licensed gun owner.

I liked him when he was a sensible Canadian.

• (1420)

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has not given an answer to my question. I asked him whether he would stand in this place on behalf of the government and condemn remarks which every member of Parliament must regard as disgraceful. Will he condemn them and apologize, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, he has already apologized. Of course we all agree with that apology and we accept that apology.

What we do not accept is the leader of the Liberal Party trying to force a policy on members of this House that he knows is wrong and that he has flip-flopped on. The long gun registry is wasteful and ineffective and we will work to get it abolished.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will ask the question again in the other official language. I did not hear the Prime Minister or his government apologize to the police chiefs of Canada. I am still waiting to hear a simple, humble apology.

Will he apologize, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member apologized very clearly yesterday, and this reflects the position of all Conservative members. All Conservatives are in favour of laws that punish criminals, and not law-abiding Canadians.

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[English]

**MILITARY POLICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION**

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, another example of the Conservative culture of deceit that has enveloped this House is the way in which the Minister of Justice comes into this House and tells the House that he is such a strong supporter of the work that is going on at the Military Police Complaints Commission, while at the same time as he says that in this House as part of the Conservative culture of deceit, the people who are in that commission are making it very difficult for the commission to do its work.

How does the minister explain this Conservative culture of deceit?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is a very irresponsible comment by the hon. member.

Officials continue to work with the MPCC to provide all relevant documents. Again, the MPCC is doing its work under the mandate that was given to it by that member's former government.

I say that we should let the commission do its work. That is in everybody's best interest.

[Translation]

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is another example of the Conservative culture of deceit. It makes no sense that the chair of the commission is not entitled to examine the same documents that are available to witnesses.

The government's witnesses and lawyers have access to the documents in question, but the commission chair does not. With this Conservative culture of deceit, the Military Police Complaints Commission cannot bring about justice.

[English]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely ridiculous. They are under the mandate that was given to them by the former government. They are governed by the laws given to them by the former government. This mandate has been tested in court. Again, why does he not just let the commission do its work?

[Translation]

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister made a surprising statement. When asked whether Rahim Jaffer, the husband of his former status of women minister, had lobbied members of his cabinet, he answered that Mr. Jaffer had never been awarded a contract. But it seems clear to me that the fact that Mr. Jaffer did not get a contract does not mean he did not lobby cabinet members.

The Prime Minister, who is a control freak, surely must have done some checking on Mr. Jaffer.

Did he check whether Mr. Jaffer lobbied members of his cabinet?

● (1425)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are laws governing lobbying. We expect lobbyists to comply with the laws that are in place. We expect that. But I repeat that there is no government contract involved in this matter.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there is no contract, but the fact that Mr. Jaffer broke the law does not excuse the Prime Minister, who is a control freak, from checking whether any of his ministers met with Mr. Jaffer as a lobbyist.

The Minister of State for Science and Technology confirmed that Mr. Jaffer's business partner had met with him about a number of projects. The minister himself said that.

Will the Prime Minister admit that Mr. Jaffer lobbied ministers? Surely Mr. Jaffer was not lobbying himself. He was meeting with ministers to lobby them.

Did he meet with one or more ministers, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are rules in place governing lobbyists. If the Bloc leader thinks that someone broke those rules, he can pass his information on to the independent lobbying commissioner appointed by this government.

This matter has nothing to do with government affairs or a government contract.

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives attacked the Liberals on ethics, they promised to ensure that ministers would register their contacts with lobbyists. They have never made good on their promise. Only the lobbyists are required to register such contacts. Therefore, it is impossible to compare the lists and determine who is telling the truth.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that, had he kept his election promise, we would at least know how many ministers met with Rahim Jaffer, the Conservative lobbyist?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government passed a clear law with which lobbyists must comply. A commissioner is responsible for compliance with the act. The serious allegations that have been brought to the attention of the Prime Minister have been forwarded to the appropriate authorities who will draw their own conclusions. There is no connection to the business of government.

*Oral Questions*

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, who supports transparency, must shed light on the number of contacts his government had with the unregistered Conservative lobbyist, Rahim Jaffer.

Is the Prime Minister willing to provide the list of all meetings that he, his ministers, his parliamentary secretaries and their staff had with Rahim Jaffer?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was this government that enacted legislation to monitor lobbyists' activities and they must comply with the law or be subject to the sanctions contained therein. A commissioner is responsible for enforcement of the act. If the opposition has allegations to make, it should address them to the appropriate authorities.

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[English]

**FOREIGN INVESTMENT**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the industry minister said in this House that Georgia-Pacific had committed to maintaining employment levels. Now, how many times have we heard him say that before, only to watch companies that were approved throw people out of work. But here we have a new gall being demonstrated by the company. Georgia-Pacific already started firing staff before the government gave approval for the takeover. The Timmins mill is closed. The Calgary operation is shut down.

Could the Prime Minister tell us how this takeover could possibly be to the net benefit of Canada?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I spoke to the minister regarding this. I understand the Timmins mill has been closed for four years. It does not have anything to do with this transaction.

As members know, transactions have to go through a process to ensure they are for the net benefit of Canada. I gather that, in this case, there is a commitment to retain staffing levels. I am also told that, in fact, all unionized staff have received offers of employment.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, of course, it would be helpful if the entire agreement could simply be tabled here so we would know exactly what has been committed to. But instead, what we get is the rubber-stamping by the current government of foreign takeovers, one after the other.

Look at what happened with Xstrata and Vale Inco. Thousands of jobs were lost on that approval. Yet, Vale Inco made twice the profit in two years that Inco made in the previous ten. It has doubled the salaries of its executives over there at that company. Why? Probably because it is taking a hard line against the workers, who have now been out 10 months on a strike to get fairness.

When will the Prime Minister learn a lesson and stop rubber-stamping—

● (1430)

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is no rubber stamp. There is a process. Often there are

conditions attached to a foreign takeover. In this case, as I have said to the Leader of the Opposition, my understanding is that it has committed to not only retain staffing levels but, in fact, has already sent out offers to unionized staff to that effect.

So, the issue is not the government providing more information to the NDP. The issue is the NDP having the facts right before it poses the questions.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the stamp may not be rubber, but there is a stamp, we can be sure of that. Because it has been used thousands of times to sell out our resources and companies without getting guarantees.

[Translation]

The reality is that the workers were fired by Georgia-Pacific even before the government gave its approval. Furthermore, employees who worked there for decades now have no guarantee of receiving what they are owed.

Since the government has failed to protect them, what guarantee do these workers have of receiving the benefits to which they are entitled?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP asked me a question about a specific company. According to my information, this company has said that it will maintain staffing levels. Furthermore, this company has already sent work schedules to its unionized employees.

\* \* \*

[English]

**ETHICS**

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. Two past Conservative candidates start a business that they proudly proclaim offers access to government grants and loans. MP business cards are handed out, the Conservative Party logo is used, and they meet with ministers, parliamentary secretaries and ministerial staff.

Does the Prime Minister actually think that it is acceptable for his cabinet, his caucus, and Conservative staffers to provide privileged access to unregistered Conservative lobbyists?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, every Canadian is equal under the law.

Let me be very clear. The allegations that the Prime Minister referred to the relevant authorities had nothing to do with government business. In fact, no government money was given under the green fund for the projects that she speaks about.

If she has any evidence of a contravention of the Lobbyists Registration Act, I encourage her to bring those forward to the independent authorities that this government established.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, only within a Conservative culture of deceit can a government think that is acceptable.



A former Conservative MP sends emails across government, including to the industry minister's office, but the government will not release the emails. He meets with the minister of infrastructure, the man in charge of the billion dollar fund he is trying to access, but the government will not say what they discussed.

How long does the government really think that it can get away with stonewalling Canadians about the truth?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, just because the member opposite says it, does not mean it is true.

We have been very clear. When serious allegations were brought forward, they were immediately referred to the relevant authorities for an independent review. That is what ethics is all about. That is what accountability is all about. The Prime Minister did the right thing.

[Translation]

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, two former Conservative candidates met with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. They submitted three proposals without ever registering as lobbyists, and the government is refusing to either disclose the contents of those submissions or confirm that one of them involved a company promoted by the dismissed minister. Such a situation would clearly be unacceptable except in the Conservative culture of deceit.

How can the Prime Minister let that kind of thing happen?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the allegations brought forward some two weeks ago had nothing to do with government business. They were immediately referred to the relevant authority for independent review.

If the member opposite has any allegations that he would like to make, I would encourage him to have the guts to make them outside this place. If he has specific evidence of any wrongdoing, he should follow the example of the Prime Minister and refer it to the relevant independent authorities.

• (1435)

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us try another example. A former Conservative candidate meets with the office of the minister for southern Ontario. He submits three client proposals to another former candidate, who works for the minister. None of this lobbying is registered until it is made public and then the minister tells the lobbying commissioner secretly. What happened to the second staffer? He received a promotion to chief of staff to the Minister of Public Safety.

How can these events be acceptable anywhere other than in a Conservative culture of deceit?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. The allegations that were referred to the government some two weeks ago involved no government business.

### Oral Questions

Let me be very clear. Any application or interest of funding that was brought forward to my department or to FedDev Ontario received no grant. No money was awarded to these individuals.

If the member has any specific allegations to make with respect to the Lobbyists Registration Act, he should follow the lead of the Prime Minister and immediately refer all of the facts that he claims to have to that independent officer so that they can be fully reviewed independently.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### JUSTICE

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister seems more interested in making political gains by promoting his so-called law and order agenda than in helping victims of crime. The government is planning to inject another \$193 million into federal penitentiaries, but funding for the victims of crime initiative will be cut by 41%.

This being National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, why is the Prime Minister not demonstrating more compassion toward victims instead of subjecting us to these big shows over and over again?

[English]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of this government's commitment to victims. We instituted the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime. In 2007 we put in \$56 million.

I want to use this opportunity to thank the Minister of Finance. I want to tell him how pleased I am, on behalf of myself and victims across this country, that he put an extra \$6.6 million in the most recent budget. That underlines this government's commitment to victims right across this country.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if the minister had just a little compassion for victims of crime, including the hundreds of people victimized by Vincent Lacroix and Earl Jones, he would not hesitate to abolish parole after only one sixth of a sentence has been served, as the Bloc Québécois bill proposes.

Can the Prime Minister explain why, after four years of Conservative government, and despite the opposition's united opinion on this subject, criminals are systematically released after having served just one-sixth of their sentence?

[English]

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with the member on legislation that would ensure that criminals earn parole as opposed to being automatically released on parole in the methods that the Liberals used to employ.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government promised to implement emergency measures to fast-track the processing of family reunification applications specifically for those affected by the devastating earthquake in Haiti on January 12. Yet Pauline Marois, the leader of the Parti Québécois, noted during her visit to Haiti that the Canadian embassy there remains paralyzed and that 1,500 applications from Quebec from before the earthquake are still in the queue, not to mention the 3,000 additional applications that are expected.

Can the government explain why nothing is happening on the ground?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is completely false. I encourage my hon. colleague to look at the incredible work being done by our public servants in the face of tremendous logistical challenges. Since the earthquake, they have processed over 1,400 permanent resident applications from Haitians. They are making a great deal of progress. Every week they are processing more and more family sponsorship applications. I trust our public servants, not the leader of the Parti Québécois.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is not the work of our public servants that poses a problem; it is the work of the minister.

The Government of Quebec has broadened the concept of family reunification in order to allow more Haitians affected by the earthquake to come to Quebec. The Conservative government should help work towards that goal instead of dragging its feet.

Can the Prime Minister confirm whether any agreements have been reached with Quebec to recognize and accelerate future applications received through Quebec's new program, even though the criteria have been expanded?

• (1440)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I met with my Quebec counterpart before the Quebec government announced that special program. I made a commitment to Ms. James that we would fast-track the applications received from Quebec.

Overall, we receive thousands of family sponsorship applications from within Quebec and Canada. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act still applies and all immigration applications from Quebec must be verified. Perhaps the Bloc Québécois wants us to ignore the law—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

\* \* \*

**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

**Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Information Commissioner has placed Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada on red alert when it comes to access to information. We talk about a red alert because the usual criteria no longer adequately describe what is going on.

Nearly 60% of all requests took so long to be processed that they became outdated. It takes an average of 163 days for a request to be completed. That is censorship.

Will the minister stop engaging in a Conservative culture of deceit?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have had a chance to meet with the Information Commissioner and we discussed this issue. As hon. members know, an extraordinary volume of work has been done over the past few months by people in my department. We are reviewing the Commissioner's recommendations.

**Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this government is mired in a Conservative culture of deceit.

The Privy Council Office, in other words, the Prime Minister's own department, refused to respond to a quarter of the requests for access to information. Under the legislation, a request requires a response within 30 days. In the Prime Minister's case, two times out of three, it takes 120 days.

When will the Prime Minister stop encouraging this Conservative culture of deceit?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, my colleague does not have all the facts. The government receives more than 40,000 requests for access to information a year. We respond to most of those requests within 30 days. Roughly 10% or 12% of requests take more than 120 days to be dealt with and we want to speed up the process.

\* \* \*

[English]

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's ombudsman for victims said yesterday that the Conservatives' agenda on crime would "not meet the needs of victims". He called the government's approach unbalanced and criticized huge cuts of 41% to the victims of crime initiative.

Canada's ombudsman for victims has been doing critical work. Now the government is showing him the door. Worse, the justice department's own report shows the budget for the victims' watchdog will be nil, that is zero dollars, next year.

Why does the government use victims when it needs votes, but forgets them when it comes time to act?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** I can only assume, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member knows nothing about the budgetary process. As I indicated in a previous question, this government has committed \$52 million to the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime.

Again, I publicly thanked the Minister of Finance for going above and beyond that by adding another \$6.6 million to assist victims in our country. This is something for everybody to celebrate.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the ombudsman the government fired is not celebrating. If the minister takes a look at the his report for 2011-12, his office is gone, zero dollars.

Watchdogs for the RCMP, the military, nuclear safety and now the ombudsman for victims all stood up to the government, criticized failures and then found themselves without a job. In a culture of deceit, watchdogs that are not Conservative cheerleaders get the axe.

In two years' time spending on prison construction will be up 238% since 2005, while funding for victims is either flat or cut. Why is the government not listening to the ombudsman instead of firing him?

• (1445)

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government has taken a balanced approach right across the board since we have taken office, and I am very proud of that record.

The member keeps mentioning the budget of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime. He has it completely wrong. That funding is in place. There has been a change; it has been increased.

Again, I am proud to be a part of the only political party that consistently stands up for victims and law-abiding Canadians. That sets us aside from all those people.

\* \* \*

#### TAXATION

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberals keep on shamefully complaining that Canadian families are not paying enough taxes. Just yesterday the Liberal finance critic stated his intention to raise taxes. Let the era of Liberal tax hikes begin, everything from hiking the GST, imposing a carbon tax and increasing job-killing business taxes.

While the Liberals scheme about new taxes and killing jobs, our Conservative government is focused on the economy and Canada's economic action plan, a plan that is working.

Could the Minister of Finance update the House on today's IMF economic outlook?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today the IMF has forecasted Canada's economic growth will be at the head of the pack for the G7 and all major advanced economies. The IMF has singled out Canada for special praise, saying, "Canada entered the global crisis in good shape, and thus the exit strategy appears less challenging than elsewhere".

We have said all along that while not immune from the global recession, we entered it and we exit it in the strongest position in the G7.

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#### INTERNATIONAL AID

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has ceded its position of leadership in fighting crimes against humanity. As a country, we are now 57th in contributions to the UN

peacekeeping missions. Nowhere is this absence more acute than in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a place where we have repeatedly been asked to send peacekeepers.

The United Nations has issued a direct appeal to Canada, asking for help in the Congo. Will the government support the request by the UN to have General Andrew Leslie lead the command of the UN mission in the Congo?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's participation in MONUC, which is the UN-led mission in the Congo, is an integral part of our regional commitment in Africa, particularly in the great lakes region, totalling more than \$250 million over the last 10 years. Long-term stability in this region hinges on the resolution of the ongoing conflict in the eastern part of the DRC.

Canada is one of the countries asked by the UN Secretariat to consider providing a candidate for the position, and we are currently analyzing that question.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yes is not that hard a word to say.

As the Governor General stated in Kinshasa, sexual violence in the Congo is a crime against humanity, but Canada's current commitment to the project against sexual violence is just about \$2 million and runs out in June 2011.

Programs to end sexual violence require sustained resources and better management to provide measures that would help people on the ground. Will the government listen to the words of our Governor General, the pleas of the Congolese and the call of Canadians to end sexual violence? Will it renew, support and strengthen—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

**L'hon. Lawrence Cannon (ministre des Affaires étrangères, PCC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada deplores the ongoing violence in eastern Congo, particularly against civilians, notably women and children, and strongly supports MONUC's efforts to end the impunity.

Canada supports stabilization and the reconstruction efforts in the DRC, and has contributed well over \$124 million in long-term humanitarian and aid development since 2006.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, although Quebec's industrial structure helped it weather the recession better than the other Canadian provinces, the figures from the Institut de la statistique du Québec show two different sides of Quebec. In all, Abitibi, Mauricie, Saguenay—Lac Saint-Jean and eastern Quebec have lost 30,000 jobs since the beginning of the recession. One out of every 17 jobs was cut in the resource regions, and the Conservative government did not do a thing.

*Oral Questions*

What is the government waiting for to completely overhaul employment insurance, to help the workers in these regions especially?

• (1450)

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am surprised by this question.

Not only did we implement our economic action plan, which helped workers across the country, but we also implemented eight different measures to support workers who were losing their jobs, including work sharing, measures for self-employed workers, and five additional weeks of employment insurance benefits.

We introduced all of these measures, and every single time the Bloc voted against them.

**Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we need a complete overhaul of the employment insurance system. But in the short term, the Bloc Québécois is proposing that we help workers with serious illnesses. My colleague from Chambly—Borduas presented a petition last week signed by over 65,000 people, calling for an extension of employment insurance benefits to a maximum of 50 weeks for people are forced to miss work because of serious illnesses, like cancer.

Will the government show some compassion and follow through with this extremely reasonable measure?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as members of Parliament, we are obviously aware of the challenges facing our constituents. The payment of employment insurance premiums is shared by employers and employees, and we try to offer as many benefits as possible to help people. As a general rule, someone who is ill is eligible for employment insurance for a period of 15 weeks. In general, the average is about nine weeks. However, we understand the situation and are still very much aware of it.

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[English]

**AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on April 5, relying upon European and Canadian data, the American department of transportation imposed a historic \$16.4 million fine on Toyota for having deprived its customers of timely safety-related information about its vehicles, and more charges are to follow. This week Toyota admitted guilt and paid the fine. In Canada there were no charges, no fines, no admissions.

When will the Minister of Transport do his job and protect Canadian motorists by holding Toyota Canada to account?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada will ensure that the full force of Canadian law and all legal measures are taken to ensure we keep Canadians safe.

My department right now is investigating this important issue and my officials are continuing to gather information on a priority basis to ensure that all Canadian laws have been respected, and if they have not, they will take appropriate action.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find the minister's indifference to Canadian drivers and their families astounding and dangerous.

In November he applauded Toyota's actions to protect consumers even as it was being investigated. On February 24, the minister claimed that Toyota had been a good corporate citizen. However, on March 17, he indicated he was considering criminal charges. What happened? Yesterday he retracted, saying that ministers did not order criminal charges to be laid.

If he cannot order them to be laid, will he ask the RCMP to investigate the breaches of the law by Toyota Canada?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the government worked when that member was a member of the cabinet, but in Canada cabinet ministers do not order criminal investigations and do not order that criminal charges be laid.

Let me tell him this. My department is working very hard. We have a top-notch group of officials that will ensure the full force of Canadian law comes down on any actor in the transportation sector that does not fully respect Canadian law.

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the refusal of the Conservatives to sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was an international embarrassment and an insult to aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Other countries that made the same mistake are now making the right choice by signing on to this important human rights document. This week at the UN, New Zealand reversed its position and now supports the declaration with no conditions.

Will Canada finally tell the UN that we support the declaration, without conditions, and will a formal date for its adoption by Canada be announced?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member did not read the same speech that I did from the New Zealand delegation, but we were very pleased to see New Zealand follow our lead. They have also moved ahead on this. Of course, as we do in Canada, we are consulting with first nation and aboriginal leaders across Canada.

We are putting together a package of ideas on making sure that, when we follow through on our throne speech promise to support the declaration, it will be done in a way that not only aboriginal people are comfortable with but all Canadians can be very proud of.

*Oral Questions*

● (1455)

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Native Women's Association of Canada released a report on the lack of effective programming to address the 582 cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls in Canada. It has been over a month since the government promised funding to address this serious issue, and we still have no details on how and when it will be delivered.

Aboriginal women in this country are being murdered. There needs to be action now. Will the Minister of Justice tell us when he plans to release the \$10 million he promised? We simply cannot afford to wait any longer.

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to ensuring that all women, including aboriginal women, are safe and secure regardless of the community in which they live. Since this is the first question we have had on this since the budget, I can say that the government will be investing \$10 million over two years to address the disturbingly high number of missing and murdered aboriginal people.

We will work with provinces, territories, aboriginal people and other stakeholders for effective solutions. After all, we all have a stake in finding a solution to this terrible problem.

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**AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during a period of global economic uncertainty, our government acted responsibly to ensure the survival of Canada's automotive industry. In co-operation with the Obama administration and the Government of Ontario, we acted to secure this vital manufacturing sector and protect its nearly half a million Canadian jobs.

Could the Minister of Industry update the House on the progress being made on our government's robust commitment to the Canadian auto sector?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made a difficult but necessary decision a year ago to support the auto sector here in Canada. We see more evidence that it was the right decision. I am pleased to rise today and indicate that GM has repaid in full its loans to the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario and the United States, well ahead of schedule. It is seven years ahead of schedule, as a matter of fact.

It is clear that Canada's auto sector is back on the road to prosperity. We have new shifts. We have new jobs being announced at Canadian auto plants. Of course, this government remains committed to our manufacturing sector from coast to coast to coast.

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**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Dennis Vialls, an Allied war veteran who fought in Normandy alongside Canadian troops, is now battling Alzheimer's. His wife is exhausted from caring for him and from fighting this stubborn government. The Ste. Anne's Hospital for veterans has empty beds. Why can the government not allow Allied veterans like Dennis

Vialls the same direct access to Ste. Anne's Hospital as other World War II veterans who fought for our freedom?

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our veterans can go to Ste. Anne's Hospital near Montreal to receive the care they need.

However, not all veterans are eligible. Certain criteria must be met. In general, people prefer to go to hospitals near their homes.

We are doing everything we can to help our veterans, but we have to follow the rules.

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today, a delegation of Algonquin chiefs is on the Hill. Now that New Zealand has declared its support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Canada and the United States remain the only countries that oppose it. No further consultation is necessary: this is what all first nations want.

When will the government stop denying aboriginal peoples' basic rights? When will it announce its intention to sign this declaration?

[English]

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, not only do we believe in rights but we have actually taken action on this side of the table. We brought in changes to the Canadian Human Rights Act that included aboriginal people on reserve for the first time ever. We also introduced another bill that will give matrimonial property rights to women and children who, as of right now, have no such property rights on reserves.

Support for those kinds of initiatives is important, but we are also moving ahead with negotiations with aboriginal leaders across the country to fulfill our throne speech promise that we will be supporting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in a way that all Canadians can be proud of.

*Points of Order*

●(1500)

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are increasingly concerned about their food, where it is coming from, how it is made and whether it is safe. EU representatives are in Ottawa this week for trade negotiations, and the future of Canadian-grown food is in question. Canada's current supply management system ensures fairness for farmers, and it benefits both Canadians and our economy.

Will the Minister of International Trade confirm that he has honoured his commitment to Canada's dairy, poultry and egg farmers and taken supply management off the negotiating table?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has been quite clear. We have been strong supporters of supply management, and we continue to be. That has not prevented us from successfully entering into free trade agreements with the United States, with Colombia and with other countries and having the benefits of the prosperity that have come from that. Our negotiations with the European Union, right now the largest economy in the world, offer us the opportunity for more prosperity, not just for Canadian workers, but also for Canadian farmers. That is why we are pursuing it.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, standing up for victims and law-abiding citizens is of paramount importance to our government. This session we introduced a bill reforming the Youth Criminal Justice Act, and yesterday our government introduced important legislation in the Senate that seeks to repeal the faint hope clause.

Can the Minister of Justice please inform the House what other legislative measures he plans to bring forward this session?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her support of our criminal justice legislation.

It is true we plan to introduce legislation to put an end to house arrest for serious and violent crimes. Now the opposition might remember this subject because it was introduced in the previous Parliament, where members repeatedly stalled it and eventually gutted the bill. As a result, criminals remain eligible for house arrest for a long list of property and other serious crimes including aggravated assault, human trafficking and luring a child. We have to change that. Canadians can be proud that they have a government that makes their concerns its priority.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government is talking about transferring Ste. Anne's Hospital, which is administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs, to the Province of Quebec. But everything is happening behind closed doors, which only serves to feed the rumours and raise concern in people's minds.

Will the minister hold public hearings before continuing his discussions with Quebec?

Will he allow veterans and the community at large to speak freely about an issue that affects them personally?

Will he honour the freedom of speech that these veterans fought for?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there were 17 different hospitals that helped care for our veterans. Ste. Anne's Hospital is the only one left.

Health insurance and health care are now under provincial jurisdiction. It is in this context that we began discussions with the Quebec government. We want to know if they would be interested in having Ste. Anne's Hospital transferred to them.

The top priority is ensuring that our veterans receive priority care, even if the hospital is transferred.

\* \* \*

[*English*]**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in a response to my question today, the Minister of Justice inadvertently misled the House.

On April 15, I asked him a similar question in regard to the Sisters In Spirit campaign. This is not the first time this question was raised. I raised it on April 15.

I am asking the minister to correct his response.

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that could be.

It was certainly the first question I had about the \$10 million that was in the federal budget, but if in fact the hon. member did raise it, I do not remember it. However, I am prepared to withdraw and apologize to her.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1505)

[English]

### 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 17 petitions.

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### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the Transatlantic Forum held in Washington, D.C., United States of America, December 7 and 8, 2009.

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[Translation]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

[English]

In accordance with its order of reference of Wednesday, March 3, 2010, the committee has considered vote 20 under Privy Council in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 21, 2011, and reports the same.

#### ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

In accordance with its order of reference of Wednesday, March 3, 2010, the committee has considered vote 40 under Treasury Board in the main estimates for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2011, and reports the same less the amounts in the interim supply.

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### INCOME TAX ACT

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-515, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (release of taxpayer's notices of assessment).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and honoured to rise in the House today to introduce a bill to amend the Income Tax Act with respect to the release of taxpayer information. This is seconded by the member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

This bill would require the minister, upon a court order, to provide a taxpayer's notices of assessment to any person to whom the taxpayer has a legal obligation to make child support payments.

### Routine Proceedings

The bill is in response to the many single parents who continue to struggle to receive child support payments they are entitled to from those who have a legal obligation to provide such payments.

This change to the Income Tax Act would ensure delinquent parents can no longer evade their responsibilities by hiding behind a provision. It is the right thing to do for children and responsible parents who are rightfully entitled to this support.

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

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### PETITIONS

#### ASSISTED SUICIDE

**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to present three petitions today.

The first two petitions are comprised of several hundred signatures. The petitioners are calling upon Parliament to retain section 241 of the Criminal Code without changes in order that Parliament not sanction or allow the counselling, aiding or abetting of suicide.

#### ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the other petition calls on Parliament to adopt a universal declaration on animal welfare.

#### CANADA POST

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to table in the House certified petitions from constituents of Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte who ask that the government maintain the moratorium on rural post office closures and to withdraw the legislation to legalize remailers.

The petitioners also note that the post office is absolutely critical to the services provided in rural communities in particular. These petitioners come mostly from the area of La Scie, as well as York Harbour and Lark Harbour in my riding.

•(1510)

#### AIR PASSENGERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

In the first petition, thousands of Canadians are joining the call to adopt Canada's first air passenger bill of rights, Bill C-310, which includes compensation for overbooked flights, cancelled flights and unreasonable tarmac delays.

*Routine Proceedings*

The legislation has been in place in Europe since 1991 and was revamped in 1995. Under that legislation, Air Canada passengers receive compensation in Europe but when they fly in Canada they do not receive any such treatment. The bill would ensure that passengers will be kept informed of flight changes, whether delays or cancellations. The rules would need to be posted in airports and the airlines would need to inform passengers of their rights and the process to file for compensation. The bill deals with late and misplaced baggage. It also would require all-inclusive pricing by airlines in their advertisements.

Bill C-310 is not meant to punish the airlines. If the airlines follow the rules, they would not need to pay a dime in compensation.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to support Bill C-310, which would introduce Canada's first air passenger s' bill of rights.

EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition, signed by dozens of Canadians, calls on the government to match funds personally donated by the citizens of Canada for the victims of the Chilean earthquake.

Members knows that on February 27 an 8.8 magnitude earthquake occurred in southern Chile and the Chilean Canadian community mobilized and held many fundraising events in Winnipeg and across the country to raise money.

People are asking when the Prime Minister will give the same treatment to the Chilean earthquake victims as he did for the victims of the Haitian earthquake and match funds personally donated by Canadians to help the victims of the Chilean earthquake.

ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have in my hands a petition signed by a handful of Albertans that call on the Government of Canada to support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

PROTECTION OF HUMAN LIFE

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

The first petition deals with life and states that Canada is a country that respects human life and includes in the charter the freedoms of everyone who has the right to life. They are calling upon Parliament to pass legislation for the protection of human life from the time of conception until natural death.

SKIN CANCER

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** The second petition, Mr. Speaker, deals with skin cancer.

As melanoma is a very serious problem, the petitioners are calling for support of a national skin cancer melanoma initiative to provide much needed access to newer drug treatments and funding for research and educational programs.

FIREARMS REGISTRY

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the last petition deals with the long gun registry. It says that the long gun

registry was originally budgeted to cost Canadians \$2 million but the price tag has spiralled out of control to an estimated \$2 billion a decade later and that the registry has not saved one life since it was introduced.

The petitioners are calling upon Parliament to support and pass any legislation that will cancel the long gun registry and to streamline the Firearms Act.

CANADA INVESTMENT ACT

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by hundreds of residents of northern Ontario who are very concerned about the failure of the government to protect Canada's serious and vital interests.

These people are concerned about the decision by Xstrata to shut down the Timmins smelter, making it known that it is cutting all the refining jobs out of Ontario, hydrating the deposits in Sudbury and laying off thousands of workers. It is the same situation we see at Vale Inco where one of the greatest mining operations in the world is being turned into a third world operation. Of course, today we see that right after the government got a commitment from Georgia-Pacific that there would be no job losses, it has already started to fire people in Englehart, Earleton and Mississauga.

The petitioners are calling on the government to open up section 36 of the Canada Investment Act so that the regions that are being completely ripped off of their resources by these foreign companies can have access to the secret agreements that the government signed so we know when the government is failing to stand up for the interests of northern and resource-dependent communities.

LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on alcohol warning labels. This petition follows hundreds of other petitions I have tabled on this subject matter over the last eight years since Parliament almost unanimously supported my private member's motion to ensure labels on all alcohol beverage containers warning that drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause birth defects.

The petitioners are very concerned that the present government, the previous government and the last six health ministers have refused to take action on this and have ignored the will of Parliament. They are doing a great disservice to this country by not ensuring that this one mechanism is added to the whole range of options to ensure that women do not drink while they are pregnant because it leads to fetal alcohol syndrome.

The petitioners remind us all about the ongoing news of the devastation caused by fetal alcohol syndrome, particularly the cost to our society, the devastation to families and the toll it takes in terms of our criminal justice system.

The petitioners implore the government to do what Parliament willed it to do eight years ago and to finally place these labels on all wine, liquor and beer bottles.



*Routine Proceedings*

●(1515)

## INTERNATIONAL AID

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition requesting funding be restored to KAIROS.

KAIROS is a faith-based organization that promotes sustainable development, human rights and peace through education, advocacy and co-operative programs. It delivers benefits to hundreds of thousands of people in marginalized communities who are facing humanitarian crises as well as political oppression and who urgently need this service.

The decision to cut funding jeopardizes a number of projects, including a legal clinic to assist women who are victims of the ongoing violence in the Congo, women's organizations that protect against human rights abuses in Colombia, grassroots local supports to peace and human rights work, and various environmental initiatives. The decision to cut the funding severely impairs the capacity of this organization.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to immediately restore its funding relationship with KAIROS and fund KAIROS overseas programs for the period from 2010 to 2013.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 78, 118 and 125.

[Text]

Question No. 78—**Hon. Dan McTeague:**

With regard to Infrastructure Canada's answer to question Q-432 in the 2nd Session of the 40th Parliament, what are the details surrounding the \$0.25 cost for the announcement of September 13, 2009 concerning the expenditure of \$3,250,000?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Infrastructure Canada has a contract with a supplier for the distribution of media advisories and news releases, through a Public Works and Government Services Canada standing offer. The rates charged under this contract are determined by distribution. The cost of \$0.25 was incurred for faxing one copy of a media advisory, including a repeat the morning of the event, and one copy of a news release to the office of the Parliamentary Press Gallery.

Question No. 118—**Mr. Marc Garneau:**

With respect to the Strategic Aerospace and Defence Initiative (SADI): (a) what funds have been provided by Industry Canada annually from SADI since the inception of the program; and (b) what funds have been announced but not yet allocated at this time?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Strategic Aerospace and Defence Initiative, SADI: a) Since the inception of the SADI program, the following funds have been disbursed on announced projects on an annual basis: \$9.6 million was provided in 2007-2008; \$32.5 million was provided in 2008-2009; As of March 18, 2010, \$16.7 million has been provided in 2009-2010.

b) There is a further \$375.4 million yet to be allocated on the announced multi-year SADI projects referred to in a). These funds are expected to be disbursed as companies perform their research and development and submit their claims. These funds are expected to be fully disbursed by fiscal year end 2013-14.

Question No. 125—**Hon. Joseph Volpe:**

With respect to the motion M-465 (Airline Passenger Bill of Rights), which was adopted unanimously by the House during the 2nd Session of the 39th Parliament on June 12, 2008, calling upon the government to bring forward a passenger bill of rights, what actions has the government taken since to bring forward an airline passenger bill of rights similar in scope and effect to legal instruments being either proposed or enacted by jurisdictions within Europe and the United States for the purpose of protecting passenger interests in a consistent and rules-based way and to provide a means of ensuring adequate compensation being offered by the airline industry to airline passengers who experience inconveniences such as flight interruptions, delays, cancellations, issues with checked baggage and other inconveniences incurred while travelling on commercial passenger airline services originating from anywhere in Canada?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to Motion No. 465, the government developed Flight Rights Canada. This initiative was aimed at informing air travellers of their rights and recourse under the Canada Transportation Act, and also included a six-point code of conduct for Canada's airlines. WestJet, Air Canada, Jazz and Air Transat recently incorporated Flight Rights Canada in their terms and conditions of carriage, making these provisions enforceable by the Canadian Transportation Agency.

Flight Rights Canada's code of conduct of Canada's airlines prescribes that carriers should: inform passengers about changes to flight times and schedule changes, and the reasons for any delays; provide alternate transportation or a refund to passengers if a flight is cancelled or overbooked; provide meal vouchers to passengers who are delayed by more than four hours, and hotel accommodation if the delay exceeds 8 hours; and provide passengers with opportunity to disembark from the aircraft after 90 minutes if the delay has occurred while the passenger is in the aircraft, if it is safe, timely and practical to do so.

This government supports consumer protection measures for the aviation industry, and is looking to ensure a balance between protecting passengers and ensuring a competitive industry.

\* \* \*

[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. 76, 79, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 91 and 92 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Routine Proceedings*

[Text]

**Question No. 76—Hon. Dan McTeague:**

With respect to the use of the government owned fleet of Challenger jets since February 2006 and for each use of the aircraft: (a) what are the names and titles of the passengers present on the flight manifest; (b) what were all the departure and arrival points of the aircraft; (c) who requested access to the fleet; and (d) who authorized the flight?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 79—Ms. Jean Crowder:**

With regard to water efficiency and conservation programs in Canada: (a) who is working to ensure a budget will be issued specifically to water efficiency and conservation programs under the Building Canada Plan; (b) when will funds be allocated to supporting innovative municipal and federal water efficiency programs; (c) will programs be implemented to encourage the protection of freshwater resources, and to raise awareness about water efficiency and conservation; (d) what action has been taken thus far to establish goals and objectives regarding water efficiency and conservation; (e) what plans are there to include demand management programs as a funding condition for large-scale water and wastewater projects as is done for transit projects under the Building Canada plan; and (f) what consultations have taken place with federal departments, provinces and territories, and Aboriginal governments to develop strategic plans for each of Canada's major river basins?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 83—Mr. Gerard Kennedy:**

With respect to the Economic Action Plan in Budget 2009: (a) under the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, (i) what applications for projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what is each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (b) under the Building Canada Fund – Communities Component, (i) what applications for projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what is each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (c) under the Building Canada Fund – Major Infrastructure Component, (i) what applications for projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what is each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (d) under the Building Canada Fund – Major Infrastructure Component, (i) what applications for projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what is each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (e) under the Provincial/Territorial Base funding acceleration, (i) what applications for projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what is each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (f) under the Recreational Infrastructure program, (i) what applications for projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what is each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (g) under the Green Infrastructure Fund, (i) what applications for projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what is each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; and (h) under the National recreational trails program, (i) what applications for projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who are the partners involved, (iv) what is the federal contribution, (v) what is each partner's contribution, (vi) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (vii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 84—Mr. Gerard Kennedy:**

With respect to the Economic Action Plan in Budget 2009: (a) under the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, (i) what applications for projects have been rejected for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who would have been the partners involved if the project had been approved, (iv) what was the requested federal contribution, (v) what was the requested contribution from each partner, (vi) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects, (vii) in what ways did the project not match the criteria; (b) under the Building Canada Fund – Communities Component, (i) what applications for projects have been rejected for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who would have been the partners involved if the project had been approved, (iv) what was the requested federal contribution, (v) what was the requested contribution from each partner, (vi) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects, (vii) in what ways did the project not match the criteria; (c) under the Building Canada Fund – Communities Component top-up, (i) what applications for projects have been rejected for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who would have been the partners involved if the project had been approved, (iv) what was the requested federal contribution, (v) what was the requested contribution from each partner, (vi) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects, (vii) in what ways did the project not match the criteria; (d) under the Building Canada Fund – Major Infrastructure Component, (i) what applications for projects have been rejected for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who would have been the partners involved if the project had been approved, (iv) what was the requested federal contribution, (v) what was the requested contribution from each partner, (vi) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects, (vii) in what ways did the project not match the criteria; and (e) under the Recreational Infrastructure program, (i) what applications for projects have been rejected for funding to date, (ii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iii) who would have been the partners involved if the project had been approved, (iv) what was the requested federal contribution, (v) what was the requested contribution from each partner, (vi) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects, (vii) in what ways did the project not match the criteria?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 85—Mr. Gerard Kennedy:**

With respect to the Knowledge Infrastructure programs within Budget 2009: (a) under the Universities and colleges program, (i) what applications for projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) has the provincial government approved funding for the project, (iii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iv) who are the partners involved, (v) what is the federal contribution, (vi) what is each partner's contribution, (vii) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (viii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (b) under the Canada Foundation for Innovation, (i) what projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) has the provincial government approved funding for the project, (iii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iv) who are the partners involved, (v) what is the federal contribution, (vi) what is each partner's contribution, (vii) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (viii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (c) under Canada Health Infoway, (i) what applications for projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) has the provincial government approved funding for the project, (iii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iv) who are the partners involved, (v) what is the federal contribution, (vi) what is each partner's contribution, (vii) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (viii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; (d) under the broadband in rural communities, (i) what projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) has the provincial government approved funding for the project, (iii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iv) who are the partners involved, (v) what is the federal contribution, (vi) what is each partner's contribution, (vii) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (viii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects; and (e) under the First Nations infrastructure programs, (i) what applications for projects have been approved for funding to date, (ii) has the provincial government approved funding for the project, (iii) where are they located and in which federal riding, (iv) who are the partners involved, (v) what is the federal contribution, (vi) what is each partner's contribution, (vii) how much of the funding has flowed and to whom, (viii) what were the criteria used to determine approved projects?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 86—Mr. Gerard Kennedy:**

With respect to the Economic Action Plan in Budget 2009: (a) for the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, (i) what meetings have taken place to date between federal government officials and their provincial counterparts, (ii) who was in attendance, (iii) what agenda or minutes were produced in the lead up or subsequent to the meeting, (iv) what briefing notes were prepared for the meeting or as a result of decisions taken at the meeting, (v) when and where did the meetings occur, (vi) was a cabinet minister, parliamentary secretary, or employee of the office of a cabinet minister in attendance and, if so, who; (b) under the Building Canada Fund – Communities Component, (i) what meetings have taken place to date between federal government officials and their provincial counterparts, (ii) who was in attendance, (iii) what agenda or minutes were produced in the lead up or subsequent to the meeting, (iv) what briefing notes were prepared for the meeting or as a result of decisions taken at the meeting, (v) when and where did the meetings occur, (vi) was a cabinet minister, parliamentary secretary, or employee of the office of a cabinet minister in attendance and, if so, who; (c) under the Building Canada Fund – Communities Component top-up, (i) what meetings have taken place to date between federal government officials and their provincial counterparts, (ii) who was in attendance, (iii) what agenda or minutes were produced in the lead up or subsequent to the meeting, (iv) what briefing notes were prepared for the meeting or as a result of decisions taken at the meeting, (v) when and where did the meetings occur, (vi) was a cabinet minister, parliamentary secretary, or employee of the office of a cabinet minister in attendance and, if so, who; (d) under the Building Canada Fund – Major Infrastructure Component, (i) what meetings have taken place to date between federal government officials and their provincial counterparts, (ii) who was in attendance, (iii) what agenda or minutes were produced in the lead up or subsequent to the meeting, (iv) what briefing notes were prepared for the meeting or as a result of decisions taken at the meeting, (v) when and where did the meetings occur, (vi) was a cabinet minister, parliamentary secretary, or employee of the office of a cabinet minister in attendance and, if so, who; (e) under the Provincial/Territorial Base funding acceleration, (i) what meetings have taken place to date between federal government officials and their provincial counterparts, (ii) who was in attendance, (iii) what agenda or minutes were produced in the lead up or subsequent to the meeting, (iv) what briefing notes were prepared for the meeting or as a result of decisions taken at the meeting, (v) when and where did the meetings occur, (vi) was a cabinet minister, parliamentary secretary, or employee of the office of a cabinet minister in attendance and, if so, who; (f) under the Recreational Infrastructure program, (i) what meetings have taken place to date between federal government

officials and their provincial counterparts, (ii) who was in attendance, (iii) what agenda or minutes were produced in the lead up or subsequent to the meeting, (iv) what briefing notes were prepared for the meeting or as a result of decisions taken at the meeting, (v) when and where did the meetings occur, (vi) was a cabinet minister, parliamentary secretary, or employee of the office of a cabinet minister in attendance and, if so, who; (g) under the Green Infrastructure Fund, (i) what meetings have taken place to date between federal government officials and their provincial counterparts, (ii) who was in attendance, (iii) what agenda or minutes were produced in the lead up or subsequent to the meeting, (iv) what briefing notes were prepared for the meeting or as a result of decisions taken at the meeting, (v) when and where did the meetings occur, (vi) was a cabinet minister, parliamentary secretary, or employee of the office of a cabinet minister in attendance and, if so, who; and (h) under the National recreational trails program, (i) what meetings have taken place to date between federal government officials and their provincial counterparts, (ii) who was in attendance, (iii) what agenda or minutes were produced in the lead up or subsequent to the meeting, (iv) what briefing notes were prepared for the meeting or as a result of decisions taken at the meeting, (v) when and where did the meetings occur, (vi) was a cabinet minister, parliamentary secretary, or employee of the office of a cabinet minister in attendance and, if so, who?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 88—Hon. Carolyn Bennett:**

With respect to Internet applications: (a) is the government working towards the inclusion of rich Internet applications within its design and development with regard to its Web sites; (b) what is the government's response to the American response to rich Internet applications made ten years ago; (c) is the government planning on adopting the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 standard; (d) what is the monetary impact of the government's present use of WCAG 1.0 standard knowing that software contractors have built WCAG 2.0 accessibility into their software; (e) have software contractors requested that the government's Common Look and Feel (CLF) Committee relax or amend their CLF standards to allow for accessibility and, if so, can the government give details of the correspondence; (f) have software contractors required that the government pay extra because it must simplify their software in order to remove these accessibility features; (g) which federal department has the responsibility to ensure that all programs, services and technologies are accessible to people with disabilities and that they are available through the mainstream channels such as the Internet and in alternate formats; (h) is accessibility a mandatory requirement within information and communications procurements to ensure that blind Canadians have access to the same resources as all other Canadians and that they can access all of this through mainstream channels such as the Internet and in alternate formats; (i) how does the government of Canada inform blind Canadians about the availability of information to protect them from incidents of identity theft and fraud; (j) are the government's Web accessibility regulations up to date with today's Web technologies; (k) are Web developers in the government given the support they need to build accessible interactive Web sites, especially when building sites that offer essential services; (l) are Web developers in the government trained in the latest Web accessibility techniques; and (m) are Web developers provided with development tools that support creating accessible Web sites and government services online?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 91—Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and, more specifically, projects approved for funding in Atlantic Canada for fiscal years 2005-2006 to 2008-2009 and for the period ending February 28 of fiscal year 2009-2010, broken down by the provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador: what specific projects were approved in each fiscal year, including (i) the names of proponents, (ii) the project title, (iii) the total cost of project, (iv) the amount of funding approved by ACOA, (v) the funding programs within ACOA for which the funding was approved?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders*

**Question No. 92—Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and, more specifically, the Recreational Infrastructure Canada (RInC) Program administered by ACOA in Atlantic Canada: (a) what was the allocation of funding available for projects under RInC for the time period between January 27, 2009 and March 31, 2010 in Atlantic Canada; (b) how much of this allocated funding has been committed as of March 3, 2010; (c) how much of the allocated funding has actually been expended to the applicants as of March 3, 2010; (d) what were the names, addresses and submission dates of the applicants submitting an application between January 27, 2009 and March 3, 2010 from the constituency of Avalon; (i) how much funding did each applicant apply for, (ii) how much funding was approved, (iii) what percentage of the overall project was funded through RInC; and (e) what is the allocation of funding for RInC in Atlantic Canada for fiscal year 2010-2011?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

**MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

**KEEPING CANADIANS SAFE (INTERNATIONAL TRANSFER OF OFFENDERS) ACT**

The House resumed from April 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act to amend the International Transfer of Offenders Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister of Canada went to China in 2009, he said that he would teach the Chinese government about human rights. He said:

And so, in relations between China and Canada, we will continue to raise issues of freedom and human rights, and be a vocal advocate and an effective partner for human rights reform, just as we pursue the mutually beneficial economic relationship desired by both our countries.

But Bill C-5, An Act to amend the International Transfer of Offenders Act, which we will be opposing, makes it clear that the Prime Minister and the members of his government have nothing to teach the Chinese government. Allow me to explain.

Under the current International Transfer of Offenders Act, when the Minister of Public Safety agrees to a request for transfer back to Canada of a Canadian imprisoned abroad, he shall consider a number of factors, including whether the offender constitutes a threat to the security of Canada, if he has social or family ties in Canada, if

he is truly a resident of Canada, what is his state of health, and so forth. In the case of a young offender, what is best for the youth is the main consideration when making a decision.

There is another key factor, set out in paragraph 10(1)(d) of the existing legislation, and that is “whether the foreign entity or its prison system presents a serious threat to the offender’s security or human rights.” Bill C-5 replaces the term “shall” with “may”. Therefore, the minister “may consider”.

Consequently, it would be up to the minister to decide whether or not to take into account threats to the human rights or to the security of the Canadian citizen being held abroad. He would no longer be required to consider the human rights. He could, if he so wished.

That means that if a person is held abroad for committing any crime, even drug trafficking, they must remain in that country even if the minister knows they are being tortured. If that country engages in torture, the minister could, arbitrarily, decide not to consider this factor for any number of reasons.

The minister can make such a decision for a variety of reasons. It may be because the offender is homosexual or does not belong to the same church as the minister. The minister may consent to the transfer. Who knows, maybe the offender’s father is a big party backer. That is the power that comes from “may” rather than “shall”.

Anything is possible when an arbitrary decision is made. Even the craziest reasons can come into play. Maybe the offender once ran for election against the minister and plans to run again. There is the potential for serious demagoguery.

Making arbitrary decisions that affect people’s basic rights and security could lead to situations that are unacceptable and completely absurd. For example, a 20-year-old Canadian woman—this is a hypothetical but quite plausible situation that could happen anytime—might have to serve a lengthy sentence abroad for attempting to smuggle drugs. She might be held in extremely difficult conditions. She might be raped by her guards and suffer all kinds of abuse. And the correctional service and another government organization could tell the minister that this makes no sense.

• (1520)

This person should be returned to Canada because the living conditions in the country in question are dangerous and pose a threat to her physical and mental well-being. But with this bill, the minister could decide quite arbitrarily not to take this information into account. He could sign on the dotted line and refuse to bring the offender back to Canada, saying that her return would endanger public safety. He could also wait a year or two before giving an answer, just as he does now. It is just as serious, but that is another story.

What is most serious is that making the decision arbitrary not only helps feed rumours about a government, but opens the door to abuse, corruption and collusion.

*Government Orders*

I seriously doubt that this government wants to enhance public safety with Bill C-5, because the current international transfer law is based on balanced criteria under which the courts can exercise appropriate oversight over the minister's decisions. The minister must consider certain factors. When there are controls in place, checking is done. Case law shows that judges have ruled that the minister was wrong or right.

With this bill, the government appears to be looking for a way to prevent the transfer of more prisoners, probably because it is of the simplistic belief that keeping these people in prisons outside of Canada will better protect the public. Unfortunately, in many if not the vast majority of cases, we would be fooling ourselves if we thought that keeping Canadian prisoners overseas was a good way to protect Canadian society. In the end, the majority of them come back to Canada. They are Canadians. We cannot revoke their citizenship. Who knows—maybe they are planning to introduce a bill to revoke criminals' citizenship. These people are Canadians and they will come back. What condition will they be in when they do? Will they have taken part in programs?

The truth is that very few countries offer programs. In Canada, however, the correctional system offers a lot of programs. Right now, programs get 2% of the funding they need. I think we should increase funding for federal programs provided by the Correctional Service of Canada to 10%. Our system looks pretty good compared to those of other countries. However, the truth is that these programs are underfunded. When we compare ourselves to other countries, we see that at least people here may have access to programs provided by the Correctional Service of Canada.

It is highly likely that Canadian prisoners incarcerated in countries that do not offer such programs will be dangerous when they return to Canada. I have been to countries where the prison system is utterly antiquated and where people are crammed together in rooms. There are all kinds of prison systems in the world. We cannot expect that prisoners will have access to good rehabilitation programs. Individuals who return to Canada may or may not have had access to programs. They will be dangerous when they come back here. They will not have been rehabilitated, and they will not be monitored by the Correctional Service of Canada.

When prisoners are transferred, the Correctional Service of Canada takes responsibility and monitors them until the end of the sentence. What we have now are people who come back here after serving their sentence and are not monitored at all. Which is the better way to protect society? The answer is self-evident. Which is the better way to protect offenders? Yes, there is some ideological conflict here. Protecting society requires prisons and a certain degree of repression, but that is not all it takes. Rehabilitation, prevention and many other strategies are critical to protecting society, and they all require funding.

• (1525)

Many experts now say that international transfers already enhance public safety because they help ensure that offenders who would not have had access to rehabilitation will automatically have access by entering the federal system in Canada. As a result, these people, instead of being deported without having received any rehabilitation, will be sent to our system where they will have access to all of that.

The 2006-07 report from Correctional Service Canada stated that offenders who are not transferred are usually deported to Canada at the end of their sentence, without correctional supervision and without the benefit of programs. Therefore, international transfers play a key role in rehabilitation, and ultimately in protecting the public.

Let us be clear: the sole purpose of this bill is to give more discretionary power to the Minister of Public Safety, regardless of which government is in power. The bill will enable a public safety minister to do whatever he or she wants. That has nothing to do with protection. In fact, if the Conservatives are telling us that they want to strengthen this legislation for more protection, then they should not remove the words "shall consider". They should be left as they are. They could add some criteria, but they should not remove the word "shall"; it should be left.

We see how this government treats Canadians and Quebeckers abroad, so we have to wonder: do we want to give this government more discretionary power? Would it not be risky to give any government more power? A government already has a lot of power, so would giving it more increase the risks?

Here is an example. Ms. Mohamud is a 31-year-old Canadian citizen who went to Kenya to visit her mother. She was unable to return to the country because she was accused of having stolen a passport. She was told that it was not hers. Eventually, after a long fight, this woman was able to prove her innocence. She is currently suing the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, the former minister of public safety, the member for York—Simcoe, and the current Minister of Foreign Affairs for \$12 million. Furthermore, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is accused of intentionally or negligently failing to conduct a competent investigation of Ms. Mohamud's case, and he is also accused of intentionally defaming Ms. Mohamud by implying to reporters that she was dishonest, that she was not who she said she was, and that she had committed criminal misconduct.

Are we supposed to trust people like this? Impossible. We cannot give them *carte blanche*. It does not matter who the minister of public safety is, now or in the future. They should not be given discretionary powers when physical safety or human rights are at issue. That is fundamental.

This bill paves the way for arbitrary decisions in terms of respect for human rights—and that is a threat to democracy—and opens the door to possible corruption or collusion.

If this bill is passed, the minister of public safety, no matter who it is, could decide that certain factors are more important than others when determining if someone should be transferred, all without having to take into consideration the individual's physical safety, health, family ties in Canada or basic rights. The minister could, as the bill states, take into consideration any factor he considers relevant. This leaves the door wide open.

This could lead to all sorts of problems: those who donate to political parties could be subject to a different standard of justice than other people, and the minister would have full rein to justify his decisions.

*Government Orders*

●(1530)

It will be impossible to prove cases of collusion or corruption because the minister will have the right to do whatever he wants and establish any criteria that he considers relevant.

If the government really wants to rid the international transfer system of all partisanship and collusion, it only has to ensure that the minister has the duty to take into consideration the criteria established in the legislation. And, yes, I said “duty”.

In closing, I asked myself a question. I asked myself why this law needs to be amended. According to most of the literature, this law works well and does a good job at protecting society, even more so because the minister has the duty to take this criterion into consideration.

The minister currently has some latitude in deciding whether or not to transfer someone. And if we look at case law, the Federal Court has backed most ministerial decisions. The best example is the De Vito case in which Justice Harrington of the Federal Court agreed with the minister's decision, even though the RCMP and Correctional Service Canada recommended that he be repatriated.

So why should we change a piece of legislation that works? Perhaps the government is trying to ensure it has the authority to eventually refuse to repatriate the child soldier Omar Khadr, if he is ever tried and sentenced. The United States wants to send him back to Canada, but the government does not want him here. But with this, if he is tried and sentenced, it will become a matter of international transfer. The Canadian government has already trampled this young man's rights, as the Supreme Court of Canada has recognized, but I have a feeling this bill will seal his fate.

Helping someone whose life is in danger is a fundamental principle for Quebeckers. This right is enshrined in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. The government's Bill C-5 flies in the face of the fundamental values of Quebeckers. This bill is completely consistent with the Conservatives' anti-human-rights ideology.

In any case, we watched as the Conservatives gladly cut several programs that allow people to fight for their rights. All United Nations member countries have signed the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In fact, although the French title speaks of the rights of “Man”, I believe that women are people too, so “human rights” is better, but that is a different argument. As everyone knows, enforcing and recognizing these rights is problematic in a number of countries. It all lies in the ability to say either “I must” or “I cannot”.

I think the Prime Minister is leading Canada towards becoming that kind of country. In fact, he is working hard to do so, and is doing a good job of it.

I cannot wait for the day when we separate from Canada and we can create our society without the shackles of Ottawa, build a country that reflects our values, a country that knows how to defend the rights of all members of its population without exception, without arbitrary decisions, without collusion and most importantly, in a very humane manner.

●(1535)

[English]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, this is just another bill in a long list of Conservative crime bills that show more of a desire for publicity over substance.

For 30 years the transfer of prisoners has occurred in this country in very small numbers. Very few are being rejected. The fact is that people who are brought from other countries go right to jail in Canada where they get into proper rehabilitation programs. If we were to leave them in jails in other countries, they would come back to Canada eventually and they would have had none of the training and rehabilitation they would have received had they been in Canada.

This is all window dressing on the part of the government with an eye on improving its position in the polls. We have to expose that for what it is. Having said that, all bills can be improved in committee and I do not have a problem with that. However, we should be exposing what the government's real intention is. There really is not a problem to be fixed in the first place. The system is working reasonably well but it is another situation that the government can take advantage of for short-term publicity gain.

●(1540)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Madam Speaker, I have to agree with my colleague. That is just what I have been saying over and over again as I watch this government's justice and public security measures: they have just been for show. In short, I would say that its only achievement—if I can call it that—has been prorogation.

A number of justice and public security bills were on the table. They were very important to the government, but then we had prorogation. To date, not many have been brought back. However, the government is serving up leftovers and making a big show of it. It wants the people to believe that it is working on ensuring public safety.

Yesterday in committee we heard from Mr. Sullivan. He told us very clearly that the government took imaginary action against the so-called criminals. The witness did not use the word “imaginary”. That is my word. The government has done nothing for the victims. The witness was unable to give me a percentage for comparison. If we were to make the comparison for him, we would see that the government was putting more emphasis on sentencing. Its crime bills have never amounted to much. The government is unable to get things done.

It likes to blame the media or the opposition. However, it was neither the media nor the opposition that prorogued Parliament. It was the government.

The government is just warming up the leftovers of its so-called tough on crime legislation. It is not tough at all, because these bills do not amount to anything. These bills are supposedly going to strengthen something, but in fact, they provide nothing but rhetoric about punishment. These bills do not punish intelligently; they are intended to punish for punishment's sake. To punish intelligently, we could send people to prison to rehabilitate them, for instance. The Correctional Services' budget for such programs is 2%.

They are going to build prisons, but not implement any programs. They are going to abolish prison farms. They are not going to provide anything for the victims but they are going to put people in prison.

If this keeps up, soon the Conservatives will reinstate the death penalty. That would solve their problem and it would cost less. They are going to lock people up and throw away the key. It is not clear whether they can or want to pay for the lethal injection. Maybe they will consider a bullet to the head, which costs only 35¢. Such is the government's policy.

The worst part is that the government will not admit it. It quietly introduces bills to try to get its ideology through. It does not even have the courage to face the issues. I challenge the government to do so.

[English]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her fine speech and the great work that she does in the public safety committee.

From reading the international transfers annual report for 2006-07, I have noticed that over the last 10 fiscal years, 26.9% of the people requesting a transfer requested a transfer to Quebec. Offenders are asked when they apply for a transfer to indicate their region of choice on their application. I also noticed that from 1996 to 2006, an average of 22 offenders a year requested a transfer into Quebec. However, in 2006-07, the very first year of the current Conservative government, that number was cut in half. Only 10 transfers of offenders from outside the country were approved to transfer to continue to serve their sentence in Quebec.

I wonder if my hon. colleague has any comments on the current government's approach to the rehabilitation of offenders. I also wonder whether or not she questions the government's commitment to Canadians being able to serve their sentences in a jurisdiction like Quebec where they might get better rehabilitation than they would in a prison in the United States, Colombia, or one of the Conservatives' other favourite countries in the world that they think we should be dealing with.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. He, too, does very good work on the committee.

When an offender requests a transfer, he does so to be closer to his family. The underlying principle of reintegration programs is to allow individuals, once they have served their sentence, to have ties that help them return to society as law-abiding citizens. To do that, they must have support. They need a family to help them. They need friends, a job, housing, there must be something waiting for them when they get out.

When we look at these figures we realize that Quebeckers ask to go home to serve their sentences. Ontarians do the same thing and return to their province—their nation—not just because they will have access to programs that will help them be better citizens, but also because they will have access to community support.

Some offenders have children. They do not want to stay in Colombia for 15 or 20 years. They want to see their children again

### *Government Orders*

and it would be cruel not to allow that. Children should not pay for their parents' mistakes. They must not pay for them. They are also victims. The offenders' spouses are also victims. There must also be some compassion.

My colleague gave the example of an offender held in Colombia or any other country that disregards human rights. Whatever crime that person has committed, he will serve his sentence in Canada. An international transfer does not mean that a prisoner hops a plane at government expense and comes home to frolic in the fields. It means that the Correctional Service of Canada picks the offender up at the airport and places him in an institution where he will have access to programs.

But programs are not treats, and they are not put in place just for fun. Programs are put in place so that criminals, offenders and inmates can become law-abiding citizens. Are they set up just for humane reasons or out of charity? They are mainly there to protect society. That is key.

One hundred inmates who have not had access to a program are far more dangerous than 100 inmates who have been transferred and have had access to a program. That is key.

I would like to remind the House about something that the current Minister of Public Safety inadvertently talked about in committee when answering a question from a party colleague. Referring to international transfers, he said that people wanted to come to Canada to serve lenient sentences. But who are these people? They are not Colombians; they are Canadians. They want to come home to serve their sentence, and they have the right to do so.

The Conservatives talk about lenient sentences, but they did not even want to do away with the possibility of release after serving one sixth of a sentence. So what are they talking about? The minister says that inmates can be released after serving one sixth of their sentence here. But that is the Conservatives' fault. If they had just done away with that possibility, there would not be a problem anymore.

• (1545)

[English]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak on behalf of the New Democrats on Bill C-5, An Act to amend the International Transfer of Offenders Act. By way of background, Bill C-5 is virtually identical to former Bill C-59, which was introduced in November 2009.

When Parliament prorogued, Bill C-59 died before it received any debate in the House. It was one of a suite of criminal justice bills, 17 as a matter of fact, which bills were actually killed by the government when in December last year it chose to prorogue Parliament and hold up much of the legislation that Canadians want and hold up the debate on many of the issues that ought to be debated.

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Bill C-5 contains amendments to the International Transfer of Offenders Act. It would be helpful for all members of the House to consider the history and background of this act. Canada has had legislation providing for the international transfer of offenders both from Canada and into Canada since 1978. The International Transfer of Offenders Act was enacted in 2004 and replaced the old Transfer of Offenders Act.

The act essentially provides a mechanism for a foreign national imprisoned in Canada to apply for a transfer to his or her home country to serve the remainder of his or her sentence. Similarly, the act provides a mechanism for a Canadian citizen imprisoned abroad to apply for a transfer back to Canada to serve out the remainder of his or her sentence here in Canada.

As I said, the old act and the current act together have been in force for over three decades in this country. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives have been in power and overseen the administration of this legislation. Liberal governments and Conservative governments have overseen the transfer and repatriation of Canadian citizens back to Canada.

Between 1978 and 2007, which is the most recent year for which comprehensive statistics are available, 124 foreign nationals were transferred out of Canadian jails, and 1,351 Canadian citizens were transferred back to Canada.

The purpose and principles of the act are quite clear. The current purpose of the act is defined in section 3, which states:

The purpose of this Act is to contribute to the administration of justice and the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community by enabling offenders to serve their sentences in the country of which they are citizens or nationals.

The Correctional Service of Canada has a website dedicated to the International Transfer of Offenders Act. This website gives more detailed background about the principles underlying the international transfer mechanism. I will quote from that. It states:

Canadians incarcerated in foreign countries often find themselves facing serious problems coping with local conditions. The most common problems involve culture shock, isolation, language barriers, poor diets, inadequate medical care, disease and inability to contact friends and family....In some prison systems, the offender's family is even expected to provide food and financial assistance. The purpose of these agreements is humanitarian to enable offenders to serve their sentence in their country of citizenship, to alleviate undue hardships borne by offenders and their families and facilitate their eventual reintegration into society. Once transferred, the offender's sentence is administered in accordance with the laws of the receiving country.

In the case of offenders, Canadians coming back to Canada, that means serving their sentences in accordance with sentencing principles of Canada. I want to emphasize that those are not my words that I just read. Those are the words of the Correctional Service of Canada. That is the description by the people we entrust, who have expertise in carceral policy in this country. It has been the policy of this country for 30 years. These are the principles the government seeks to change by this very flawed, poorly conceived, unjust and totally ineffective legislation.

Let us consider the current process for a transfer application under the act. For a transfer of a Canadian citizen to take place, the offender must consent to the transfer, the country where the offender is currently imprisoned must consent and the Canadian government must consent. Let us be clear. This requires tripartite agreement of all

of the actors and it requires them to agree in every particular case, without which the transfer application will not proceed.

• (1550)

The Minister of Public Safety is then designated to review all applications for offender transfer. The present act specifies the factors that the minister shall consider when evaluating an offender's application for transfer. In section 10, four criteria are outlined. Let us consider whether these criteria are appropriate.

First, the minister must consider whether the offender's return to Canada would constitute a threat to the security of Canada. Right there, the national security of Canada is four-square in front of us as a criterion that must be considered. Second, the minister must consider whether the offender left or remained outside Canada with the intention of abandoning Canada as his or her place of permanent residence. Again, this is not a provision for fair-weather Canadians who then want to seek the protection of Canada. This is for Canadians who happen to be abroad when a criminal offence is committed by them.

Third, the minister must consider whether the offender has social or family ties in Canada. Fourth, the minister must consider whether the foreign entity or its prison system presents a serious threat to the offender's security or human rights. These four criteria have been applied successfully and well by every government in this country for over 30 years. However, the current government suddenly has problems in applying these criteria.

I will pause here to say one thing. My research indicates that not one offender, who has been granted a transfer back to Canada to resume and serve his or her sentence, has ever reoffended. I think that the changes proposed by Bill C-5 will reveal to all Canadians and members of the House how poorly this bill is conceived. Bill C-5 seeks to add the words "to enhance public safety" to the purpose of the act. I am going to come back and talk about that in a minute because of course everybody is in favour of public safety.

The act currently states that the minister shall consider the factors that I just outlined. Bill C-5 would change this to read "the Minister may consider the following factors". Bill C-5 also seeks to add the phrase "in the Minister's opinion" to the existing factors laid out in the act. Bill C-5 would also add seven new factors, once again that the minister "may" consider.

I am going to stop there to say that the Conservatives have taken a judicial, legal process under a statute of Canada and have essentially said that the only Canadians who can be transferred back into this country, who have been convicted abroad, are people that the minister wants. That is it. There is no judicial way to challenge that. There is no legal way that a person could compel the minister to consider certain factors. It is whatever the Minister of Public Safety wants.

That is bad public policy and I would say that whether the minister of public safety was a New Democrat, a Liberal, a Bloc Québécois member or a Conservative. It is wrong.



*Government Orders*

There is a saying that we use in law schools to describe completely arbitrary law. We say that justice is measured by the length of the chancellor's foot. It might be six inches, eight inches or 10 inches. Nobody can ever tell because it is whatever is subjectively in the mind of that chancellor.

This is exactly the kind of legal thinking that typified our system 300 years ago, much before we had concepts like human rights, due process or rule of law. I would not expect the government to understand that, considering some of the legislation I see coming out of it.

These are some of the factors that the minister may consider: whether the offender is likely to engage in criminal activity in Canada, the offender's health, whether the offender has participated in rehabilitation programs, the manner in which the offender will be supervised after this transfer, and whether the offender has cooperated with police.

Let me stop here and say a couple of things. Think of this in terms of public safety. Say we had a Canadian serving a sentence in a Pennsylvania prison, much like David Radler, the person involved who was convicted and testified against Conrad Black. By the way, he applied under this legislation and was approved by the government to come back and serve his time in Canada. I did not hear the government complaining when a multi-millionaire applied under the International Transfer of Offenders Act and was granted the ability to come serve his time in Canada. I heard not a peep from the government.

● (1555)

However, if a person applied from Pennsylvania and came to Canada, that person would be coming here directly to jail. There is no public safety component to that. If that individual is serving time in a U.S. prison, that individual would continue to serve the time in a Canadian prison. There is no public safety aspect whatsoever. That individual is not coming back to this country to actually re-enter society. That individual is coming back to Canada to re-enter penitentiary.

One might say that people are going to be released into custody. This the major flaw and absurdity of the bill. When those people finish their sentence in Pennsylvania, the first thing the United States is going to do is deport those offenders back to Canada and Canada has no choice but to receive them. So those people are coming back into Canadian society at the conclusion of their sentence no matter what. I will talk in a minute about how foolish that is and how this act actually makes Canadians safer by having those people transferred to a Canadian jail.

I want to talk about public safety because public safety is important. New Democrats agree that enhancing public safety should be given consideration when considering any piece of legislation that comes before the House. However, in this case the government has not presented one iota of evidence that public safety is being compromised under the current act. Nothing. But I have heard the public safety minister as well as members of the public safety committee say that they do not care about statistics, they do not care about the facts. They think they can define what are good criminal penal laws in this country by what they think or feel as opposed to the data.

It is important to remember that Canadians transferred back to Canada under the act are not being released immediately into the community and again, they are returning to serve out their prison sentence in a Canadian correctional facility.

I mentioned earlier why I think that public safety is enhanced by granting prisoner transfers. Offenders who serve their sentence in Canada will be subject to the oversight of a parole officer, released with conditions that must be followed, and can have their rehabilitation and reintegration into the community carefully planned and monitored. The offenders who are sitting in a Pennsylvania jail or a Mexican prison have none of those things.

Offenders who serve their time in a foreign jail often have no rehabilitation, no programs, no substance abuse programs, no mental health programs, often nothing. In fact, often it is the case that they do not even speak the language of the country in which they are imprisoned.

Most importantly, Canada has no record of offenders who are not transferred back to this country, when they are released from a foreign jail and come back to Canada. They will come back to this country and we have no criminal record. We have no record of them serving time in prison. They will come back and they will be treated as a first offender if they do ever commit a crime in Canada.

Whereas, if they are transferred to a Canadian prison, we will have records. It will not be the criminal record. We will have records of them being in a penitentiary and then of course again, when the offenders are released into the community we can actually spell out the conditions of that release and supervise them. So it is actually less safe to pass this legislation. The Conservatives are endangering Canadians by passing this legislation because it will result in fewer people who are being approved for transfer.

I want to talk about whether there is actually a problem to be fixed here. The act is working. The Conservatives are trying to build a narrative that says that Canadians are being endangered because the Conservatives do not have enough power to deny applications for transfer. Again, I will trouble them with the facts.

From 2002-07, under both Liberal and Conservative governments, 367 applications for transfer were approved by the ministers involved and 24 were denied. So 367 times both Liberals and Conservatives decided to bring an offender back to Canada. Of those 24 denials, 3 offenders applied for judicial review of the minister's decision. One case was a denial based on the fact that the offender had spent 10 years in the United States and was deemed by the minister to have abandoned Canada as his or her place of permanent resident. So the federal court judge made a ruling stating that the court should not readily interfere with the discretionary decision of a minister and held that the minister's findings were not unreasonable.

Another case was a denial because the minister held that the prisoner had been identified as a member of a criminal organization and that the transfer would threaten the security of Canada. In that case, the CSC gave advice to the minister that the transfer would be highly beneficial and that the individual would not constitute a threat to the security of Canada. Nevertheless, the judge held that the decision of the minister was reasonable and the denial was allowed to stand.

*Government Orders*

●(1600)

Of the three denials, two cases were challenged and the minister's discretion was upheld. In the third case, the minister again made a denial on security grounds. The judge in that case, however, found that the decision of the minister was made with disregard to the "clear and unambiguous evidence" presented by the government's own officials. In this case the judge referred the decision back to the minister for re-determination.

The government points to this one case where a judge has overturned a ministerial denial, and on this basis it says, "Oh, we need to tighten the law".

There was another case reported earlier this year, however, that I think is probably more revealing of the government's true feelings on this. This is where the judge did order a reconsideration of ministerial denial. In this case four individuals were convicted together of a single crime. Two of the individuals had transfer applications approved, but one was denied despite the unanimous recommendation of senior government officials.

The judge ruled that the minister's decision was inconsistent and arbitrary, and he gave the minister another 45 days to explain and justify or to reconsider the decision. This seems to me to be a very appropriate balance and a fair ruling, and yet the government continues to argue that it needs changes to this act.

I think this is the case, that the government wants to act arbitrarily and the current legislation prevents it from doing that. There has not been any case made that there is any reason to depart from the current scheme of the act, other than the government wanting to politicize the process and hand pick whoever it wants to come back into this country.

Again, the problem with Bill C-5 is that it does not strengthen the act, it shreds it. It does not strengthen the guidelines for the minister, it essentially eliminates them. Bill C-5 dictates that the minister may take certain facts into consideration, but then again he or she may not.

In the current act, the factors are presented as objective standards that can be evaluated by officials and, in the rare cases where it is necessary, ruled upon by a judge.

Now this opens up the process to bias. It does away with transparency and accountability. It allows the minister such wide-ranging discretion to ignore criteria completely and use his or her own subjective opinion as the test as he or she deems appropriate. That is wrong because it replaces an established law-based process with a politicized subjective one.

We might ask whether the government can be trusted to exercise discretion fairly. For New Democrats, this question of trust must be answered, unfortunately, in the negative. The government has demonstrated it cannot be trusted with unfettered power, whether it is the power to prorogue Parliament, or to hire and fire watchdogs and oversight officials, or to approve George Galloway, a British member of Parliament coming into our country and exercising his right of free speech as opposed to Ann Coulter who made derogatory and racist comments about many individuals.

We know what the government will do. It will exercise its political ideology instead of acting as fair and judicious public officials in this country.

With this bill the government proposes that the minister should be given absolute power and absolute discretion over who to bring back to Canada and who to leave overseas. It will do away with the judicial avenue for review by framing the minister's decision in such discretionary terms that it would be impossible for anyone to successfully argue that the act had been violated.

I want to ask, how do other countries feel about this? Because Canada has agreements with many countries for the reciprocal transfer of offenders. This is not just a Canadian plan. This is a program that involves dozens and dozens of countries. I suspect that if we ask other countries how they feel about the government wanting to essentially restrict the international transfer of offenders, which works beneficially for citizens of all countries, I would bet that those countries would express their displeasure to the government.

I want to talk a little bit about the politicization of justice because that is what I think the government is doing. If members go outside the Supreme Court of Canada or any court in this land, they will see a statue of the scales of justice with a blindfold on the statue, the goddess of justice. That is there for a reason. It is because justice ought to be objective and blind. It needs to have fair rules and fair law-based processes that apply to everyone equally, and not to allow judges to hand pick and not be accountable for their decisions by writing the rules that say it is whatever they think it is.

●(1605)

I want to end with a quote from the International Transfers Annual Report 2006-2007, which states:

In the 29 years since the first international transfer took place with the United States, there has been a steady increase in the number of agreements in place with foreign countries...increasing the number of applications received for processing... and of the number of offenders transferred to and from Canada. It ensures that offenders are gradually returned to society and that they have the opportunity—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Perhaps the hon. member can complete his comments in response to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert.

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I commend my friend for his eloquent and passionate speech however misguided it might have been.

I have a couple of specific questions.

The current legislation talks about "threat to the security of Canada". I am sure my friend knows, because of his research, that this phrase has been interpreted to apply only to terrorists. Is he not concerned that this is too narrow a definition? Should public safety also apply to offences that happen domestically in breach of our own domestic laws?

*Government Orders*

Would he also not agree with me that the absence of victims, the safety of any person in Canada who is a victim as identified in section 2(1), or the family of a victim, or the safety of any child in the case of an offender who has been convicted of a sexual offence involving a child are glaring omissions from the current legislation, all of which would be remedied by Bill C-5?

• (1610)

**Mr. Don Davies:** Madam Speaker, the short answer is absolutely not. I will say this again. Bill C-5 would add this factor to the act, “whether, in the minister’s opinion the transfer will endanger public safety, including the offender’s victim, family or any child in cases where the offender has committed a sexual offence involving a child.

Once again, I do not know if my hon. friend listened to what I said. The offender in the foreign prison is coming back to society anyway. This amendment does not change that fact. The only question is whether anybody in the House wants that person to come back to our country treated, have any programming, or subject to any conditions. Under my hon. colleague’s premise, the offender would be granted the transfer, would stay in the foreign prison, would come back to this country to go right after the victim and we would not even know it.

I know my friend is a learned counsel. I would think he would stand and tell the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety that this is a bad law. That will endanger victims in this country.

Again, this is what the 2006-07 report from the government said:

An analysis of the information contained in this report doesn’t only demonstrate that the purpose and the principles of the International Transfer of Offenders Act have been fulfilled; it supports that the International Transfer of Offenders program is consistent with the Mandate of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and its Mission Statement in that the program contributes to public safety by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens, while exercising reasonable, safe, secure and humane control [is being met].

Those are the facts.

The definition of national security has not been restricted to terrorists. I quoted from a case earlier where a member of a criminal organization was barred entry under that by the minister and that was upheld by the courts.

I believe the protection is in the act.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member’s speech and to the question from the hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert.

I gather the member supports sending the legislation to committee for an *Extreme Makeover*, as the television folks would say. I do not think he had time to flesh out what he might think this over-discretionary “any other reason the minister may take into account” means.

It seems to me that with the existing protocol, with the additional reasons, which we may or may not agree with, it is the catchphrase “may any other factor” that troubles us on this side of the House. We cannot imagine any other factors. Is it not the point that all of the presumed, existing and potential factors be put in the legislation so

lawmakers can understand what discretion the minister may use? Discretion to be used has to be carefully guarded and defined.

I ask him to blue sky, or black sky, or whatever that might be about what those other reasons may be. I also want him to answer clearly whether his party will vote to send the legislation to committee.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Madam Speaker, again, the question strikes at one of the major flaws with this bill, which adds a section to a bill that says to a minister that he or she may consider any other factor that he or she considers is advisable. That is simply bad law. It is a bad statute. It is a bad way to implement any kind of public regime. We may as well just say that the people who can apply for transfers back to this country are Canadians whom the minister thinks should. I would ask any of the lawyers in the House how we would challenge such a decision if that were made.

The government has a history of not protecting Canadians abroad, and the prime example is young Omar Khadr. He has sat in a foreign prison when every other country has repatriated their foreign nationals who have sat in that illegal dungeon on Guantanamo Bay. However, the Conservative government will not return Mr. Khadr back to our country to be tried or dealt with in some fashion here. This person has not been tried yet, has not been convicted, yet for years and years has sat in a jail cell, probably tortured, in fact undoubtedly tortured.

This is the kind of discretion that the government wants to give the minister. Frankly, not only should this government absolutely not have that kind of discretion, no responsible government in Canada should have that kind of discretion.

• (1615)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the critic has done a terrific analysis of the bill. I question the government’s commitment to victims. It talks a lot about victims’ rights and about how it supports those, but even its own victim’s advocate, whom it appointed three years ago and whose contract will not be renewed, indicated last night that he thought the government was not doing what it could for victims, that it was more concerned with sentencing than it was with the rights of the victims. I wonder whether the government even consulted with victims and their groups with regard to the legislation.

How is the government helping victims by leaving criminals untreated in a foreign country? When they come back on their own, which they will eventually, how does that help the victims?

**Mr. Don Davies:** Madam Speaker, Mr. Sullivan, the outgoing ombudsman for victims, said quite clearly yesterday that victims were very interested in the rehabilitation of the offender. In fact, they want to be informed of it. They want to be alerted to it. It is key to their healing that the offender, in their eyes, will not reoffend. This legislation is counter to that.

*Government Orders*

Mr. Sullivan also pointed out that longer sentences, which is what the government seems to be pursuing as a plank in its criminal justice program, did very little for victims. Those are not my words. Those are the words of its appointed ombudsman for victims, who has done a great job speaking up for victims in our country.

The New Democrats, and I cannot say it more clearly, are a party that supports the rights of victims more than anybody. Our party, more than any, has championed the rights of the most vulnerable, the most marginalized of every type in our country for a long time.

Let the nonsense end here. For any party to stand in the House and say that we do not care about victims is just false and not true.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I believe if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, at 3 p.m. on Thursday, April, 22, 2010, the House resolve itself into committee of the whole in order to welcome Olympic and Paralympic Athletes; that the Speaker be permitted to preside over the committee of the whole and make welcoming remarks on behalf of the House; and, when the proceedings of the committee have concluded or at approximately 3:15 p.m. the committee shall rise and the House shall resume its business as though it were 3 p.m.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** 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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**KEEPING CANADIANS SAFE (INTERNATIONAL TRANSFER OF OFFENDERS) ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act to amend the International Transfer of Offenders Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this House today to speak in favour of Bill C-5, An Act to amend the International Transfer of Offenders Act.

This legislation would further strengthen our government's track record of keeping our streets and communities safe for everyone and to ensure that those who do commit crimes are held responsible for their actions.

Since coming into office in 2006, our government has made the safety and security of Canadians one of its top priorities. That is why we have pushed forward with a series of measures to get tough on crime, especially violent gun crime. For example, members will recall that in the last session of this Parliament any killing linked to

organized crime would automatically lead to a charge for first-degree murder.

To further combat the reach of organized crime, this government has also introduced legislation that imposes mandatory jail time for those involved in serious drug offences. In addition, we have passed laws that address drive-by shootings and other intentional shootings that brazenly disregard both our laws and the right of all Canadians to their safety.

We have passed legislation that gives added protection to the police and peace officers who put their lives on the line every day that they go to work. I would like to pay tribute to the members of the Canadian Police Association who have been visiting us on Parliament Hill the last few days.

Offenders have always done their best to go undetected and the rapid pace of technological change has made this easier than ever. Hidden in the dark alleys of the information highway, offenders are attempting, and often succeeding, at stealing the very identity of their fellow Canadians.

I am proud to remind all members of the House that this government has passed tough new laws that help the police and the courts fight the scourge of identity theft.

However, the wheels of justice often turn more slowly than we would like. As a result, there may be considerable time spent by an individual in pre-sentence custody. I am very proud that the government has passed laws that limit the amount of credit offenders will receive while in pre-sentence custody. In this way, the guilty will serve a sentence that truly reflects the severity of their crimes.

These are but a few examples of the government's efforts and accomplishments to keep our communities safer, to ensure that offenders receive appropriate sentences and to ensure that the rights of victims are heard and respected.

However, as the Speech from the Throne notes, our work is far from over, and I am pleased that this government has already taking further action.

Members will recall that the Minister of Public Safety recently reintroduced legislation to strengthen the national sex offender registry. This measure would provide additional protection for our children from abuse and exploitation.

With that background, I am pleased that our Conservative government has reintroduced amendments that would strengthen the International Transfer of Offenders Act.

As members will recall, and as the last speaker correctly identified, Canada has been a party to international treaties relating to the transfer of offenders since 1978. Since that time, 1,531 Canadian offenders have been transferred back to Canada, while Canada has returned 127 foreign national offenders in our prisons back to their countries of citizenship. The initial legislation, which was modernized in 2004, now, in the interest of public safety, has to be amended once again.

*Government Orders*

Currently, the Minister of Public Safety is required by law to take several factors into account when considering a request for a transfer. These include: first, if the offenders returned to Canada would constitute a threat to the security of Canada; second, consideration of whether the offender left or remained outside Canada with the intention of abandoning Canada as their place of permanent residence; third, the offender's social or family ties to Canada; and, fourth, whether the foreign entity or prison system presents a serious threat to the offender's security or human rights. No doubt, these are important considerations which ought to be taken into account. However, there are deficiencies.

● (1620)

Nowhere in the current law is there any specific mention of protecting the safety and security of law-abiding Canadians. Nowhere in the current law is there any specific mention of victims, family members or children. I would submit to the House that these are serious omissions that the bill before us would certainly correct.

Moreover, Bill C-5, when passed by the House, will allow the minister to consider a number of other factors when considering offender requests for a transfer. Specifically, the Minister of Public Safety will be able to consider situations where an offender who requests a transfer to Canada has refused to participate in career, vocational or educational programs while incarcerated in another country. The minister will also be able to take into account the circumstances in which the offender, if transferred to Canada, will be monitored and supervised after his or her release. This is especially important, given that one of the purposes of the act under consideration will continue to be contributing to the administration of justice and the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community.

Bill C-5 would also allow the minister to take into account several other very important considerations when assessing an offender's request for a transfer. These are as follows: If the offender has accepted responsibility for the offence for which he or she has been convicted, including acknowledging the harm done to victims and also to the community; and, if the offender is likely to continue to engage in criminal activity if the transfer is successful. These considerations should surely help to guide decisions about whether to grant a request for a transfer from an offender serving a sentence outside of Canada.

Currently, there is no clear legislative authority for the minister to take those matters into account. Bill C-5 would surely remedy these deficiencies, while providing the minister more flexibility in the decision-making process itself.

I will now highlight how the proposed amendments would help keep Canadians safer, because I believe all members of the House are interested in keeping Canadians safe. The amendments before the House would add public safety as one of the purposes of this legislation. These are two simple words but these simple words will clearly reinforce the government's commitment to ensuring that Canadians, their families and their children are safe and secure in their communities. At the same time, the amended legislation would ensure that offenders remain accountable for their actions, both in Canada and abroad, and continue to be treated fairly and equitably when they are making a request to be transferred.

The legislation as it stands would empower the Minister of Public Safety to assess an offender's potential security risk when considering a request to transfer back to Canada. However, as I indicated in my intervention with the previous speaker, the notion of a threat to the security of Canada has been linked solely to terrorism threats to Canadian people as a whole. We believe that is too narrow and must be expanded to include public safety risks to Canadians domestically and locally in their own communities. The bill would add to this by including as a factor whether, in the minister's opinion, the offender's return to Canada will endanger public safety. The Minister of Public Safety will consider, among other things, the safety of victims, the safety of any child and the safety of members of the offender's family.

To further guide the minister's decision-making on these matters, the amendments propose other factors that would add greater flexibility in considering transfer applications. An example as to how this might work in practice is that if the offender is likely to commit criminal activity in Canada, the minister may take this factor into consideration when entertaining the transfer request.

Conversely, this legislation also has factors that would actually assist offenders in making applications successfully. For example, if an offender is in poor health, has co-operated with law enforcement officials or has acknowledged the harm he or she has done to victims in the community, the minister may take these factors into account when considering the transfer request.

I would submit to all members of the House that these are sensible changes and, moreover, much needed. When the minister assesses the potential risk of transferring an offender back to Canada, it is not enough to examine the likely threat to national security. Public safety must also be a principal consideration in that decision, and public safety must include more than threats of terrorism.

This legislation is timely considering that it is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. It also ensures that helping victims of crime remains at the heart of the government's public safety and justice agendas.

● (1625)

On this side of the House, we have always believed that every victim matters. We are committed to ensuring that victims' voices are heard and their concerns are taken seriously. That is among our highest priorities and why we have taken action on so many victims' rights issues.

The legislation before us is proposing to help further strengthen this track record by ensuring that the safety of victims can be taken into account when assessing a request for transfer. The changes our government is proposing stipulate that the safety of family members and children will be taken into account. This is an important change and a clear deficiency in the act as it currently reads.

The minister would be able to consider the issue of the transfer of an offender with assault convictions against family members and if it would endanger their safety. The minister would also be able to consider an offender incarcerated for a sexual offence against a child in a foreign state and if he or she is likely to commit a sexual offence against a child if transferred to Canada. Surely, these changes are sensible and all members ought to support them.

*Government Orders*

Bill C-5 would ensure that the Minister of Public Safety may consider public safety as part of the decision-making process for the transfer of offenders. As such, this bill reflects this government's commitment to strengthening the rights of victims, increasing the responsibility of offenders and making our communities safer.

While the amendments before the House today are simple and straightforward, they would have a significant impact on the lives of Canadians who are concerned about the transfer of offenders back to Canada. Accordingly, I urge all members to join with me in ensuring the speedy passage of Bill C-5.

• (1630)

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's comments and I will ask him some very serious and succinct questions emanating from his speech concerning public safety.

Yes, it is a goal of legislation and, yes, the words would mean something for sure. However, if a person is incarcerated for a specified term in the United States for a heinous crime or is transferred and put in a Canadian prison for the same term, for that amount of time how does it affect public safety?

The follow up to that is, If that person is in one of the sardine can jails in a state in the United States receiving no treatment, no rehabilitation, nothing, as opposed to being in one of our corrections facilities where corrections means what it means and there is programming—presumably the member still believes in that—how would it not be better for public safety if someone who has committed a heinous crime has treatment if he or she is going to be away from the public for the same period of time anyway?

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber:** Madam Speaker, surely the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe does not believe that people do not commit crimes while they are incarcerated and that they are not a threat to public safety. They commit crimes against other prisoners, prison guards and prison officials and occasionally they leave the institutions to which they have been assigned and, therefore, become a serious public risk to members at large.

In a more general generic sense, to answer the member's question, this bill and the amendments to it strike a balance. He talked about tin can prisons abroad. They do exist and this legislation strikes a balance with respect to humanitarian consideration for the prisoner. If the prisoner is in fact in a situation where his or her human rights are under severe jeopardy, consideration ought to be given to his or her transfer. However, that concern for his or her human rights needs to be measured against the risk to public safety.

We believe that the legislation before being amended was too concerned with the rights of prisoners and little, if any, concern for public safety. The amendments, which emphasize victims' rights and the rights of the public at large, create the appropriate balance when entertaining these transfers.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I must agree with the comments of the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe in his last question. This bill is largely a PR exercise on the part of the government. The fact that it was introduced before the Prime Minister prorogued the House, setting the whole process back, is once again further proof that the government is not as tough on crime as it suggests it is.

Just last night we had Mr. Sullivan, who for the past three years has been the government's own appointee to look after the rights of victims, criticizing the government and saying that the government was more concerned about punishment than it was with the rights of victims.

We have an act right now that has been working just fine for 30 years. The government now decides, on the basis of one or two cases, that it wants to make these changes and put all of the discretion in the hands of the minister when we in fact have a very good process that works right now and has worked for 30 years. It is politicizing the process so that people like Mr. Radler can get quick entry back into the country, but somebody else who the minister does not like can be quashed. That is not the way to run a justice system.

My question for the member gets back to the whole issue of having these people under treatment when they are in a Canadian prison. He says that they might be attacking other prisoners and guards so we should leave them in the United States. The fact is that they will get out of prison in the United States some day without treatment and they will come back to Canada. I would submit to him that they are a bigger danger to public safety when they come back after 10 or 15 years untreated than they would be if we brought them back now and got them treated now.

• (1635)

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber:** Madam Speaker, I am confused by the hon. member's question. He talks about how he believes the current system is appropriate and how the current legislation as it reads is effective and then he goes on to cite a high profile example of a Mr. Radler who was transferred under the existing process. If he believes, as he seems to believe, that the current process is deficient, certainly he would support the government's attempt to amend the legislation.

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am not sure whether the hon. member's speech was his speech or whether it was the propagandists on the other side of the wall. However, I will assume that he understands the bill fully and not just what has been prepared for him here. I know he sits on one of the committees that deals with these things.

He mentioned some sections that he agreed with here in the amendments. There are two things he did not mention and I am wondering what he thinks. First, the criterion under subparagraph (g) simply says, "the offender's health". Does that mean good health, bad health or indeterminate health? What kind of health does it mean? What kind of a consideration is that when it does not really have any meaning?

Second, in subparagraph (l), at the very end of all of the considerations, the minister has "any other factor that the Minister considers relevant". Why bother having any factors at all if at the end of it the minister can take into consideration any factor the minister considers relevant? How is that even charter compliant when there are no boundaries put on these considerations?

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his good questions. They are technical but I think I can add my interpretation as a lawyer as to what these provisions mean.

*Government Orders*

When I read subparagraph (g), “the offender’s health”, I believe that if the offender is in a state of poor health or requires some imminent treatment for his or her health, that is a factor that will be weighed positively in the offender’s application. That is my interpretation of that provision.

With respect to the discretionary provision in subparagraph (l), “any other factor that the Minister considers relevant”, as the member knows, as all members who study these issues ought to know, different countries have different prison systems. It is impossible to predict with any sort of clarity or certainty exactly what type of situation or what kind of conditions a prisoner might be facing abroad or the prisoner’s personal circumstances that led him or her to run afoul of the law in whatever foreign country he or she finds himself.

I think the discretionary provision contained in subparagraph (l) is most appropriate because there may be a situation where there is a very relevant factor that ought to be considered but does not fit neatly into subparagraphs (a) through (k). Subparagraph (l) allows the minister to consider a specific and unique issue or consideration under a unique circumstance when it might be appropriate.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Before resuming debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, Aboriginal Affairs; the hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche, Rural Regions; the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Employment.

• (1640)

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-5. As we know, this is not the first time the House has seen the bill. As it has with much of its legislation on crime, the government has accused the opposition of stalling when its measures are not adopted immediately. However in the end, it is the Conservatives, the Conservative Party, the Conservative Prime Minister, the Conservative Minister of Justice and, in this case, the Minister of Public Safety who terminate their own bills and then reintroduce them with an apparent urgency that they have contradicted. Can you say prorogation, Madam Speaker?

If the House is to properly examine Bill C-5, we ought to be talking about the purposes of, and any existing problems with, the international transfer program as it exists. In other words, in broken English, if it ain’t broke, why fix it? If the House is to amend the act, we must do so with an understanding of the objectives of the transfer program. I certainly want to make it clear from the outset that we on this side are recommending that we send the bill to committee and that some things can be done to the bill at committee to improve it.

As the current International Transfer of Offenders Act reads:

[*Translation*]

The purpose of this Act is to contribute to the administration of justice and the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community by enabling offenders to serve their sentences in the country of which they are citizens or nationals.

The House is well aware that the purpose of this program is to facilitate the administration of justice and the rehabilitation of offenders.

[*English*]

Correctional Service Canada clearly puts forward the reasons that brought Canada to adopt the international transfer of offenders, as follows:

If offenders are not transferred, they may ultimately be deported to Canada at the end of their sentence, without correctional supervision/jurisdiction and without the benefit of programming.

Whatever amendments we make to the bill, this has to be the overall objective with respect to public safety and reintegration.

It seems to be a flaw in the whole Conservative justice agenda to pretend that no one ever gets out of prison. Well, people do serve their sentences and they get out of prison. They get out of detention facilities. They get out of federal prisons. Many people get out of prison. In fact the overwhelming majority, up to 90% of people, are back on the streets, and what have we done with those people in terms of rehabilitation?

It may be a generalization to say, but I am guessing people serving 10-year sentences in a correctional facility in Texas probably do not get the amount of rehabilitative programming that they do at Dorchester Penitentiary in the county of Westmorland in the province of New Brunswick. I do not have the evidence on that. I am standing on a limb with a wild guess on that, but that is why we have committees and that is why we have the test of evidence at committees, which helps us mould a bill.

Not only does the possibility exist that we may have no idea of a citizen’s criminal record in a foreign country, but the act as it stands serves a clear rehabilitative purpose. In other words, people who serve their entire sentence in a foreign jurisdiction are deported at the end of that sentence back to Canada, often and in many cases by administrative fact, without a permanent transfer of the record of what that person has done. So if a person is a dangerous offender and for some reason serves his or her sentence in an American or other jail, he or she could be brought back to Canada without public safety authorities knowing that there is a dangerous offender candidate in the community. That cannot be in the interests of public safety.

[*Translation*]

Every day, some 2,000 Canadian citizens are incarcerated somewhere in the world. According to the Correctional Service of Canada, authorities here may never hear about it even if the offender has a criminal record, because there is no record of the sentence in Canada. There can be no doubt that Canadians serving prison sentences abroad face serious difficulties. According to the Correctional Service of Canada:

Canadians incarcerated in foreign countries often find themselves facing serious problems coping with local conditions. The most common problems involve culture shock, isolation, language barriers, poor diets, inadequate medical care, disease and inability to contact friends and family.

*Government Orders*

• (1645)

[English]

The Canadian consular personnel in foreign countries provide all the assistance to the incarcerated that they can, but it cannot be a substitute for serving time in Canadian institutions, especially when these people are going to be back on the streets of Canada. The act, as it exists, is well warranted in its intentions and the services it provides in ensuring appropriate justice is afforded to Canadian offenders.

To summarize, the purpose of these agreements is humanitarian in enabling offenders to serve their sentences in their country of citizenship, to alleviate undue hardships borne by offenders and their families and, I would suggest, to marry the objectives that my friend from Edmonton—St. Albert indicated. That is, the dual concerns of humanitarianism and public safety.

The existing act takes into consideration the fact of their eventual reintegration into society. Under the existing formula, once transferred, the offender's sentence is administered in accordance with the laws of Canada, in this case. Quite simply, transfers enable offenders the opportunity of becoming productive members of society, particularly through managing justice and rehabilitation of the offender.

Bill C-5 seems to go against many of the principles that shaped the international transfer of offenders program. The Conservatives have attacked the fact that individuals, Canadian citizens, are being transferred from foreign countries to Canadian prisons to serve out their sentences. The government has, however, approved many of those transfers. While it purports to support strong and effective justice legislation, it enables potentially dangerous consequences through this bill. It is important to underline that the minister and the government, for four years, have used the existing legislation to allow people to serve out their sentences in Canada, when the act already contains a ministerial discretion.

The International Transfer of Offenders Act does not permit a program out of some sense of feeling sorry for the offenders. We ought not to think that everyone on this side is more concerned about the offenders than public safety. In fact the theme of the speeches I am hearing on this side is all about public safety married with the concern for humanitarian and Charter of Rights protections.

If an individual commits a crime in a foreign country, is tried, convicted and ultimately imprisoned, that citizen cannot be guaranteed our sense of Canadian justice, which includes restorative justice and rehabilitation. These are central to the concept of our Criminal Code.

I have often said and I will say again that a Canadian Conservative created the Criminal Code, Sir John Thompson. It is one of the best accomplishments of a Conservative politician in Canadian history, so let us not say I am unfair and overly partisan. I am complimenting a Conservative justice minister and prime minister.

In section 718, there is laid out our principles of sentencing. If we listen to the Conservative news network, we might think that the only consideration for sentencing ought to be punishment, deterrence and locking people away, but that is not our system. That is not what we all believe in. We believe in many principles of sentencing as set

out, which in section 718, briefly, are to denounce the conduct, to deter the offender and people generally from doing the same thing, to separate offenders from society, to assist in rehabilitation, to provide reparations and restitution for those wronged and to promote a sense of responsibility in offenders.

That says it all. That is our system of justice. The question is: Does this new act strike a balance, or does it go more to the side of making sure people are far away from society and not a threat to public safety until they are not? Then, coming from some crazed asylum known as the American correction facility of the day, they are let out on the streets in Canada, because I have heard nothing from the other side that they will invoke the Galloway measure, that they will say that an offender, having served his or her time in an American prison, will be barred entry to Canada from, say, the United States.

I do not think the United States would accept that. It would want to deport criminals who have served their time. Make no mistake, these offenders are going to be on our streets at the end of their sentences, whether they serve them here or there. The real question is: Should they serve those sentences, in the best cases possible, and in the majority of cases they are transferred, in a Canadian facility or an American one or a foreign one?

• (1650)

I am dwelling on American facilities because the statistics are fairly clear that an overwhelming number of Canadian citizens serving sentences abroad are in American prisons.

When the individual is released, which will happen, he or she will be deported back to Canada without the effect of our rehabilitative programs.

The degree to which offenders may require help is extensive. Currently one in ten individuals imprisoned is suffering from mental illness. We only have to read the comments of Senator Michael Kirby in the newspapers today to know how important it is on a non-partisan level and something which should unite all Canadian elected and non-elected officials, and how important and grave mental illness challenges are in Canada. This number, one in ten individuals in prison suffering from mental illness, only goes up among female offenders, and the plausibility that citizens imprisoned overseas will not receive appropriate help is real.

I was very involved in wanting to have a resolution to the tragic consequences of Ashley Smith's death. She was from Moncton. She was not treated appropriately by our correction system. I am hoping that the public safety minister will take the recommendations of Howard Sapers and others, including Bernard Richard in the province of New Brunswick, and better our system with respect to incarcerated females, incarcerated youth and those incarcerated who have mental health issues.



*Government Orders*

As it stands, Canada is party to treaties that allow offenders to serve their sentences in their country of citizenship. The Minister of Public Safety currently decides whether a transfer into Canada of a Canadian citizen or out of Canada of a foreign offender is allowed. The minister already has some discretion.

However, this bill proposes to modify the International Transfer of Offenders Act by changing the words “the minister shall” to “the minister may”. On top of this, it also adds new factors that the minister may take into account.

These are certainly questions that will be launched at the minister, officials of the public safety department and other witnesses at the committee, which is why this bill must go to committee to be studied.

We want to know what these other reasons might be. A law which has wide discretion that does not define the parameters of that discretion is a dangerous law. I would think that would be a very salient factor to consider for us as lawmakers who may be passing, if we pass this part with the open-ended discretion, a law that knows no bounds. It is against our parliamentary tradition.

These amendments are greatly concerning. Considering that this bill will see the transformation of a rules-bound structure into a flexible and absolutely discretionary ministerial duty, this is hardly an improvement on the existing program.

The most recent statistics from Corrections Canada, as has been revealed in previous debates, reveal that there were only 53 transfers to Canada in 2006-07. As far as is known, there are no considerable problems with the application of the program which was amended in 2004.

It does beg the question, and I think in the presentation of the government there might have been an exposition of the problems, what were the problems with those 53 transfers to Canada between 2006-07? Were those people threats to public safety?

From the government's bringing these amendments to this protocol, it is inferred by us that the terrorist protection provisions do work. There were exclusions of those who were incarcerated and who were let out from foreign institutions from Canada based on those reasons, and that is working.

Somehow the public safety issue had not been taken into account. There are 53 cases. Of the 53 cases there must have been something in the government's mind in passing this. There must have been instances where people who were allowed to serve their sentence in Canada should not have been allowed to. They presumably would have served the sentence elsewhere and come back to Canada anyway, so are they not still a public safety risk? It is a question that must be asked at committee.

As it stands, applications for an offender's return to Canada can be refused for a number of reasons. This is the existing regime.

•(1655)

In the past, if the offender left Canada with the intention of abandoning the country, for example, somebody like Conrad Black who actually gave up his citizenship, that was clear evidence he was abandoning the country as his place of residence and in this case

citizenship. One reason would be if the offender's return to Canada would constitute a threat to the security of Canada, or if the offender has no social or family ties in Canada or is linked to terrorist organizations.

The Minister of Public Safety is also required to consider whether the conditions of incarceration pose a serious threat to the offender's safety or human rights. As such, the transfer acts as a means to enhance basic human rights.

Bill C-5, however, would amend the existing legislation so that the minister is not necessarily bound by those fairly sensible criteria. The bill would add a list of factors that empower the minister to use his or her complete discretion as to whether to consider the current and binding standards in the protocol.

Bill C-5 would now see new factors, and they have been canvassed in previous speeches, about whether the offender has sufficiently accepted responsibility for the crime.

Well, the offender is serving the time. I guess what is wanted is a guilty plea from the incarcerated person after the person has been found guilty. I wonder what the importance of that is other than to get satisfaction that a person who has already served his or her time will have to enunciate that he or she did the crime. Maybe there is a question about the foreign systems of law, but we take it in our system that if the person has served the time for the crime, the person probably did the crime. At least in law we find that is the case.

The other factor that is new is the minister is left to determine whether in his or her opinion the offender has co-operated with foreign authorities.

In some cases, the foreign authorities, which is the whole purpose of this legislation in the first place, might not be easy to co-operate with. There might be foreign countries which we do not co-operate with fairly well. Increasingly, the government seems to have a problem with a number of countries and it would seem odd that should be a factor in letting someone back.

Finally, we can see that under the proposed changes there is that basket of “any other factor”. Clearly, at committee that has to be tightened up.

If we look at those reasons, they do not all point to enhanced public safety, as one of the previous speakers, in fact the member for Edmonton—St. Albert, suggested. We are looking for sensibility in this bill. I hope that it will be explained at committee exactly how this would enhance public safety.

What is greatly concerning is that in some jurisdictions there are cases of innocent Canadians accused and convicted who would now have to renounce their innocent or not guilty plea and accept responsibility for an act they did not commit to avoid incarceration in a foreign prison.

I would for once say something very positive about the American justice system. It is similar to ours. It may be even more protective of an accused's rights in that if a person is found guilty in the United States, barring all the John Grisham novels, the person is probably guilty. However, in many jurisdictions there are innocent people who have been convicted.

*Government Orders*

The person would have to renounce that plea to get back into the country to serve the sentence.

Does this House feel that Canadian citizens should have the right and the opportunity to be transferred if their conviction and imprisonment should result in harsh imprisonment?

Think of the family members who have a son or a daughter who committed a crime in a country where its conditions of imprisonment are very different from ours.

In closing, it would seem to me that this bill is eminently ripe to be sent to committee. Questions that should be asked are: What exactly is going on here? Why is it that the system is not working? Is it that bad? How does it enhance public safety to send back to Canada criminals who have served their time in a foreign jail, with no treatment and are now on our streets?

We support sending this bill to committee. I am looking forward to any questions there may be.

● (1700)

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friend from Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe for his observations and comments with respect to this important legislation.

He opened and closed his speech on the same topic. The system, according to him, seems to be working and he is confused as to why we need to amend a piece of legislation if it is in fact working. That is how I understood it.

My specific question is, does he not agree that the absence of any mention of victims, families of victims, or children in the case of an offender who has been convicted of a sexual assault involving a child, in the current legislation is a glaring deficiency and ought to be corrected by a legislative amendment?

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with the member. If we are talking about a Canadian-administered charge and a Canadian court case, I would absolutely agree. In fact, I read from section 718. I think it is evident that is taken into consideration.

We are talking about a crime that was committed in a foreign jurisdiction. Justice was meted out in a foreign jurisdiction. We are talking about a person imprisoned in a foreign jurisdiction. The victim is a non-Canadian national and has had justice in another jurisdiction.

The victims that we should be concerned about are the victims of the crimes that might be committed by someone who was in a sardine can prison in Dallas, Texas and arrives at the Canadian border without having had any rehabilitation or treatment for drugs or anything else and then poses serious public safety harm to future victims. That is what I think is off about this bill.

[Translation]

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, as the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe and many other members, especially those on this side of the House, have pointed out, Canadians who return to Canada after serving long sentences in foreign countries without access to rehabilitation programs and without a record to ensure follow-up will most likely pose a greater

danger to society than individuals incarcerated and rehabilitated here who will have a record. That is not rocket science.

I have a question for my colleague. I am not a member of the committee, but I am really surprised at what is being proposed here today. It seems to me that the minister wants to introduce a bill for the sole purpose of giving himself discretionary power. There can be no other reason for this. Can the member explain to me exactly why the minister wants to do this?

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question, and I wish his hockey team the best of luck—but not really—in the playoff games against the Moncton Wildcats.

Seriously, I have no idea. I am not a member of the committee either and I am not very familiar with this bill. However, when I read this bill, I can see that there are a lot of mistakes. The main one is increasing the minister's discretionary power. I have no idea why the minister needs more power. This is not a majority Parliament, and the current system is not posing a problem.

That would be a good question to ask the minister in committee.

[English]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe makes excellent points, both in his speech and his answers to questions. I think we could apply the old adage to the situation with this bill that if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

In the conclusion of the International Transfers Annual Report, 2006-07, it clearly states:

An analysis of the information contained in this report doesn't only demonstrate that the purpose and the principles of the International Transfer of Offenders Act have been fulfilled; it supports that the International Transfer of Offenders program is consistent with the Mandate of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and its Mission Statement in that the program contributes to public safety by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens, while exercising reasonable, safe, secure and humane control. It ensures that offenders are gradually returned to society and that they have the opportunity to participate in programming that targets the factors that may have led to their offence.

This program has been in effect for 30 years. There is no big outcry to make this change. Now the government, for whatever reason, has decided to focus on this particular bill to essentially give more discretionary power to a minister when in fact we currently have procedures in place under the old act which are procedurally based. The question is, why is this necessary?

This bill will go to committee. We could probably make improvements to every single bill in the House, but maybe not the changes the government wants to make. There are probably some other ideas that the Liberal critic, members of the Bloc or the NDP have that could be added to this bill at the committee stage, but I see no need to fix something that has been working fine for 30 years.

● (1705)

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Madam Speaker, I am absolutely in agreement with the member.

*Government Orders*

I take comments seriously from credible people like the member for Edmonton—St. Albert. I quoted the principles in section 718 of the Criminal Code and that is what we live by. If that is part of the *raison d'être* that is great and that should be lauded at committee.

If there is a need to have an extra territorial aspect of this, the apology or the owning up to the crime that is inherent in this discretion, that goes to the victimization in the United States. I suppose if it were reciprocal we would appreciate it. Maybe there is some international law evidence on this that the committee could find out.

Other than cheap politics, I am at a loss as to why the victim's wording is relevant in this legislation. The victimization, as I see it, may well happen on Canadian streets at the end of a served sentence when the person from a foreign country lands here and has had no rehabilitation and is just crazy out for vengeance.

When we get a new victims ombudsman, maybe he or she should give evidence. Certainly the former ombudsman would be a great witness. He has done great work. I cannot imagine why his mandate was not renewed. He would be quite a telling witness now for sure because he has fired many volleys against the ineffective work of the Conservative government with respect to victims.

If this is all about victims, then the committee has its work cut out for it in hearing from people who actually, with respect, know something about it.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member talked about the enhancement of public safety that the Conservatives want to put in this particular bill.

As the member has rightly pointed out, how would public safety be enhanced if we leave these prisoners in their tin can jails in Texas, as he mentioned, without any treatment? How would the public safety of Canadians benefit when these people get out of prison after serving their sentence without having any sort of treatment and they are back on the streets in Canada? How will that improve public safety in this country?

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Madam Speaker, the short answer is that it will not. What will enhance public safety, and we have become very cognizant of this fact in the last few days, is a real commitment to our police and security services across this country. They were here this week and did not feel that the government had delivered on its promises to make our streets more secure or to have more men and women in uniform, and they are not in uniform, patrolling our streets and keeping our communities safe.

I have said this a hundred times. There is not one person in this chamber who is not for public safety and public security. We all should be trying to work toward that. It is just a matter of calibrating it, not recalibrating it, and getting it right.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-5, An Act to amend the International Transfer of Offenders Act, which is a carbon copy of Bill C-599 introduced on November 26, 2009. This bill amends the International Transfer of Offenders Act to provide that one of the purposes of that act is to enhance public safety and to

modify the list of factors that the minister may consider in deciding whether to consent to the transfer of a Canadian offender held abroad.

Let me preface my remarks by saying that we can learn a lot by listening to our colleagues in the House. I listened carefully to the Liberal member who spoke previously. He said that this bill would be studied in committee. What does that mean for the Quebeckers and Canadians who are watching? It means that the Liberal Party will vote in favour of the bill, but will want to improve or amend it in committee.

That is not what the Bloc Québécois is going to do. We have to stop being afraid of the Conservatives' right-wing philosophy. The Liberals are afraid. They wonder what the public will think. A bad bill is a bad bill.

The problem with the Conservatives is that the only place where they see an opportunity to make political gains is on law and order issues. They are trying to make sweeping law and order changes, even though those changes make no sense. Quebeckers have always held onto certain values, and we expect Canadian nationals who commit a crime abroad to be judged according to our values. If not, we expect the country where they are charged to honour our policies and our values. Otherwise, we will return our nationals home.

There are international agreements about offender transfers. This bill is designed to give discretionary power to a Conservative minister. The Bloc Québécois will always be against giving right wingers the power to decide whether or not to return Quebeckers and Canadians home, no matter what they may have done. Depending on the country, charges are laid. I will give some examples. In some cases charges are laid, but six or seven years later, they still have not been processed.

Bill C-5 is designed to give the minister more discretionary power when he decides to transfer a Canadian who is serving a sentence abroad.

Instead of having to take into consideration the offender's health or, worse, the fact that the foreign prison system presents a serious threat to the offender's security or human rights, the minister would now be allowed to consider any factors he likes, without being obliged to consider them all. We can see the right-wing philosophy. The government will repatriate Canadians when it suits it to do so, but leave them to their fate when it does not.

But human rights are, by their very nature, non-negotiable. Parliament cannot allow a minister to overlook potential human rights abuses. Every human being, even the most despicable criminal, has fundamental rights.

The Conservative ideologues want to use this bill to give themselves the option of evaluating the fundamental rights of Quebeckers and Canadians on a case-by-case basis, although the courts have consistently ruled against this and have called the Conservatives on it many times. Mr. Smith and Mr. Arar are just two devastating examples.

*Government Orders*

Knowing the Conservatives' dogmatism, particularly on this issue, it would be irresponsible of us to give them more room to manoeuvre when it comes to negotiating the basic rights of Quebecers and Canadians, especially those being held in a country that believes that incarceration and mistreatment, such as torture, are the only solutions to crime.

The Conservative government has not provided any factual reasons for amending the legislation. What is worse, the minister has acknowledged that much of what is in the bill is already covered in the act, but says that Bill C-5 spells it out. He also added that he has cases in mind that he does not want to discuss, and these cases would justify the amendments.

● (1715)

Again, we see this right-wing philosophy whereby they are right and everyone else around them is wrong. Our fear is that the government has a hidden agenda.

Why would we trust people who see and present themselves as white knights, but are anything but? Just look at the case of Rahim Jaffer driving dangerously while impaired and in possession of cocaine—he once campaigned for drug free schools—or the violation of the Access to Information Act where criminal offences have probably been committed, or the matter involving the former Conservative minister who just left cabinet, or Mr. Blackburn, who fancies himself above the law, or the Afghan detainee abuse situation.

When we see their attitude toward the court challenges program or the Khadr case, they are anything but sincere. It is highly likely that the Conservatives see this as a way of imposing heavy sentences abroad rather than having to deal with parole and rehabilitation here. That is the crux of the problem.

The Conservatives would like to impose a right-wing philosophy on Canadians and Quebecers. These are not the values that were passed down by our ancestors. The Conservatives were elected and they represent a certain segment of the population, but, again, the entire population is represented in the House and they have to accept that.

I say that in all politeness to my opposition colleagues. The NDP knows the score, but the Liberals have to stop being afraid of the Conservatives. We, in Quebec, showed them a long time ago what we were made of. The Conservatives have not bothered us in Quebec in ages. People have to stand up to them, not let themselves be run over. Only then will they realize that this American style, right-wing philosophy is not what our ancestors wanted for us. It is not the type of society I want to pass on to my children and my grandchildren.

I will always fight against extremists who, for purely political reasons, decide to manipulate things and change the law. Often, the government takes a piecemeal approach. When something terrible is sensationalized by the media, it decides to change the law. When it comes to law and order there needs to be balance. The beauty of law is in its balance.

We have seen how the Conservatives have attempted to introduce all manner of bills to shift the balance established by our ancestors. It is terrible to see the damage this can do in right-wing societies. The Americans chose the conservative route. We all recall the Republican

era: incarceration was the rule, people were sent to jail. A few months ago, the American president had to release 20,000 inmates. He said that because of their lesser sentences, they should not be incarcerated and had to release them because of overcrowding in prisons. That is difficult to grasp. The Conservatives support incarceration but they would like all citizens to carry a gun. It is rather difficult to understand. They want to abolish the gun registry. They would like everyone to be able to defend themselves. They would like to play cowboys and Indians. That is how the Conservatives react.

Once again, that is not the society that the ancestors of Quebecers and Canadians left them. That is not the type of society that we are used to. It is the Conservatives who want to change that. As I was saying, the Americans are changing course. They tried it and the crime rate did not go down. The prison population has risen and they do not have the money to look after, let alone rehabilitate these people.

The balance I was speaking of earlier is not achieved by simply incarcerating people. We must also be able to rehabilitate them. We have to allow citizens who have committed lesser crimes, who can be reformed, to be rehabilitated. We have to invest the necessary resources and not just use these people or punish them by incarcerating them.

● (1720)

We know that prisons are where people go to learn how to become criminals. First the Conservatives tried everything they could to send children under 18 to adult prisons. That was a terrible initiative. We must rehabilitate criminals, especially young ones. The younger they are, the easier it is to instill new values. This is what we should be doing, which is why a balance must be struck between repression and rehabilitation. That is what the Bloc Québécois has always advocated in all areas.

The Bloc Québécois has been the toughest party in the fight against organized crime. It was the Bloc Québécois that introduced a bill to reverse the burden of proof in connection with the proceeds of crime. Now criminal groups have to prove where their money came from. Previously, the burden of proof was on the government, and it was much more difficult. This measure allowed Quebec to mount Opération printemps 2001, which targeted organized crime, starting with the Hells Angels.

That is one way of going about it. We need to be tough at the right time, and not simply for the sake of being tough or because we want to jump on any kind of media bandwagon. Indeed, we often realize a few weeks or months later that the situation was not as serious as we thought and that it was blown out of proportion.

Acting on impulse is always a bad idea, even in our lives. We must take a balanced approach, even in our own lives, and never go on instinct alone. Acting on instinct or impulse can be costly to consumers and that applies to everything. That is why it is important to always be wary of the Conservative philosophy. As we know, instead of having to take into account established factors, the minister will now be able to consider whatever factors he chooses.

We talked about health and how offenders are treated. That is one philosophy. Torture is not allowed in Canada. We cannot allow a government, even a Conservative government, and a minority one at that, to outsource torture.

Serious accusations are being made because the government refuses to give the House all of the documents related to the Afghan prisoners. There are suspicions that torture was outsourced to Afghan authorities. That is the worst of them. I have a hard time understanding why the Conservatives refuse to release these documents. We need to be able to tell the public that we defend our society's values throughout the world.

That is not what Bill C-5 does. The minister is being allowed to choose why he will or will not bring an offender back to Canada. If it is left up to the minister, he could decide to leave an offender or Canadian citizen for a longer period in a country where torture is used, in order to get something from him. That is not right.

We cannot play with human rights and with the values our society believes in. These values are there in good times and in bad, and that is always what we strive for.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, this is a bad bill. Giving a Conservative minister the powers and the discretion allowed for in this bill is a bad decision.

• (1725)

The Bloc Québécois will oppose this bill and will not send it to committee as the Liberals are doing. Obviously, if the Liberals vote with the Conservatives, this bill will go to committee, but we will do everything we can to ensure that it does not pass. The minister was not able to convince us of the merits of this bill, other than the fact that it gives him the discretionary power to choose why or why not to bring an offender back to Canada, and gives him more latitude and flexibility. He must have some cases in mind, but he does not want to share them. This kind of Conservative, right-wing, extremist behaviour is very disappointing.

I am very surprised to see that my colleague, the member for Pontiac, now espouses right-wing values. I knew him in his previous life in municipal politics. I always thought of him as a balanced and conciliatory person, but he seems to have taken on some bad habits since joining the Conservatives. He was a Liberal in Quebec, but now he is defending American-style right-wing conservative philosophy tooth and nail. President Obama had to let 20,000 people out of prison because there was not enough money to look after them, let alone rehabilitate them. The member for Pontiac and his government want to invest more money in prisons and put more people in jail. Those are not the values our ancestors passed on to us, nor are they the values I want to pass on to my children and grandchildren.

Once again, I chose the right party: the Bloc Québécois. Bloc members will always stand up for human rights and the values we cherish. Those values should protect our citizens no matter where they are in the world. We will certainly not give a Conservative minister the power to make decisions for purely political reasons. They seem to think it is a good idea right now. They are impulsive. They see what is going on in the media, so they introduce a bill to fix

### *Government Orders*

the problem. They hope to win a few more votes. But the Conservatives will not win more votes in Quebec, and they know it.

We will never support Bill C-5. If the Liberals support it and it goes to committee, Bloc members of the committee will do their utmost to make members of every political party understand that this is a bad bill. Giving a discretionary power to a right-wing Conservative minister is not a good idea. Sometimes they have good ideas that we can support, but this is a bad one.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked about values. He does not believe that the values in the bill are his values. The bill does two things: it promotes the rights of victims and promotes public safety. Why are those values not the values of the Bloc Québécois?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Madam Speaker, this bill has only one purpose, and that is to give discretionary power to a Conservative minister who clearly has a right-wing philosophy and a fondness for media events. We are not willing to let a right-wing Conservative minister decide the fate of Quebec and Canadian nationals.

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Bloc member a question. As someone who has done a lot of work in this area, I am impressed with what he said.

Did he know that no transfers were denied in 2005, but 28 were last year? Does he take it for granted that some people who are not guilty may not be able to return to this country because of the Conservative government's hardline ideology?

• (1730)

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Madam Speaker, my colleague is quite right. Even worse, we get the feeling that the Conservatives are outsourcing their philosophy to countries that do not respect the human rights we enjoy in Canada. They are probably doing this to try to get something out of Quebec and Canadian nationals, when these people should be able to expect their rights to be respected just as they would be in Canada.

\* \* \*

### **BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—REPRESENTATION OF QUEBEC IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The House resumed from April 20 consideration of the motion and the amendment.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1755)

*And the bells having rung:*

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

*Government Orders**(Division No. 30)***YEAS**

## Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bevington	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Chow
Christopherson	Comartin
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Donnelly
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faillie	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Godin	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	Julian
Hughes	Lalonde
Laframboise	Layton
Lavallée	Leslie
Lemay	Lévesque
Lessard	Maloway
Malo	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Marston	Masse
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Ménard
Mathysen	Mulcair
Mourani	Ouellet
Nadeau	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Plamondon
Paquette	Rafferty
Pomerleau	Siksay
Savoie	Stoffer
St-Cyr	Thibeault
Thi Lac	Wasylycia-Leis— 80
Vincent	

**NAYS**

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Arthur
Ashfield	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Bélangier	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooze
Byrne	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannis	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Coderre	Cotler
Crombie	Cummins
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dosanjh
Dreeschen	Dryden
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Dykstra	Eyking
Fast	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guarnieri	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Holland	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Mark	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Oliphant
Pacetti	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Pearson	Petit
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Raïtt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Valeriote
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Volpe	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilfert
Wong	Woodworth
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Young	Zarac— 208

**PAIRED**

## Members

Bellavance	Finley
Laforest	Ritz— 4

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment lost.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion, the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

• (1805)

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

*(Division No. 31)*

**YEAS**

Members

André	Asselin
Bachand	Beaudin
Bigras	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brunelle
Cardin	Carrier
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Faille
Freeman	Gagnon
Gaudet	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lavallée	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Malo	Ménard
Mourani	Nadeau
Ouellet	Paillé (Hochelaga)
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)	Paquette
Plamondon	Pomerleau
St-Cyr	Thi Lac
Vincent — 45	

**NAYS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Arthur
Ashfield	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Bélangier	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Calandra
Callkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannis	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson

*Government Orders*

Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Coderre	Cotler
Crombie	Cummins
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dosanjh
Dreeshen	Dryden
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Eyking
Fast	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guarnieri	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Holland	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Mark	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Oliphant
Pacetti	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Pearson	Petit
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
Shiplay	Shory
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Valeriotte
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Volpe	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilfert
Wong	Woodworth
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Young	Zarac — 208

*Private Members' Business*

## PAIRED

## Members

Bellavance  
Laforest

Finley  
Ritz— 4

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

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**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[*English*]

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT**

The House resumed from April 14 consideration of the motion that Bill C-429, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-429 under private members' business.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 32*)

## YEAS

## Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Arthur	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Beaudin
Bélangier	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Bevington
Bigras	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brisson
Brunelle	Byrne
Cannis	Cardin
Carrier	Chow
Coady	Coderre
Comartin	Cotler
Crombie	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Donnelly	Dorion
Dosanjh	Dryden
Duceppe	Dufour
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking	Faille
Folco	Foote
Freeman	Fry
Gagnon	Gaudet
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Guarnieri
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Holland	
Hughes	Julian
Kania	Karygiannis
Kennedy	Laframboise

Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	MacAulay
Malhi	Malo
Maloway	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Ménard
Mendes	Minna
Mourani	Mulcair
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Neville	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paillet (Hochelaga)	Paillet (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Patry
Pearson	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Proulx
Rae	Rafferty
Ratansi	Regan
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Sgro	Siksay
Silva	Simms
Simson	St-Cyr
Stoffer	Szabo
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Tonks	Valeriote
Vincent	Volpe
Wasylcyia-Leis	Wilfert
Wrzesnewskyj	Zarac— 144

## NAYS

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Baird
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruninooge
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mark
Marston	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menzies	Merrifield



*Private Members' Business*

Miller  
 Moore (Fundy Royal)  
 Norlock  
 O'Neill-Gordon  
 Oda  
 Payne  
 Poilievre  
 Preston  
 Rajotte  
 Reid  
 Richardson  
 Saxton  
 Schellenberger  
 Shipley  
 Smith  
 Stanton  
 Strahl  
 Thompson  
 Toews  
 Tweed  
 Van Kesteren  
 Vellacott  
 Wallace  
 Warkentin  
 Weston (Saint John)  
 Woodworth  
 Young— 141

Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
 Nicholson  
 O'Connor  
 Obhrai  
 Paradis  
 Pettit  
 Prentice  
 Raitt  
 Rathgeber  
 Richards  
 Rickford  
 Scheer  
 Shea  
 Shory  
 Sorenson  
 Storseth  
 Sweet  
 Tilson  
 Trost  
 Uppal  
 Van Loan  
 Verner  
 Warawa  
 Watson  
 Wong  
 Yelich

Bevington  
 Blackburn  
 Blaney  
 Bonsant  
 Boucher  
 Bourgeois  
 Breitreuz  
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
 Brown (Barrie)  
 Brunelle  
 Calandra  
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
 Cannon (Pontiac)  
 Carrie  
 Casson  
 Chow  
 Clement  
 Coderre  
 Cotler  
 Cullen  
 Cuzner  
 Davidson  
 Davies (Vancouver East)  
 DeBellefeuille  
 Del Mastro  
 Deschamps  
 Devolin  
 Dorion  
 Dreeshen  
 Duceppe  
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)  
 Eyking  
 Fast  
 Folco  
 Freeman  
 Gagnon  
 Gallant  
 Généreux  
 Godin  
 Goodale  
 Gourde  
 Grewal  
 Guay  
 Basques)  
 Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)  
 Hall Findlay  
 Harper  
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
 Hiebert  
 Hoback  
 Holder  
 Hughes  
 Julian  
 Kania  
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
 Kerr  
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
 Lake  
 Lauzon  
 Layton  
 LeBlanc  
 Lemay  
 Leslie  
 Lévesque  
 Lukiwski  
 Lunney  
 MacKay (Central Nova)  
 Malhi  
 Maloway  
 Marston  
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)  
 Mathysen  
 McCallum  
 McGuinty  
 McLeod  
 Ménard  
 Menzies  
 Miller  
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
 Moore (Fundy Royal)  
 Mourani  
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)

Bigras  
 Blais  
 Block  
 Bouchard  
 Boughen  
 Braid  
 Brison  
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
 Bruinooge  
 Byrne  
 Calkins  
 Cannis  
 Cardin  
 Carrier  
 Chong  
 Clarke  
 Coady  
 Comartin  
 Crombie  
 Cummins  
 D'Amours  
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
 Day  
 Dechert  
 Demers  
 Desnoyers  
 Dewar  
 Dosanjh  
 Dryden  
 Dufour  
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
 Dykstra  
 Faille  
 Fletcher  
 Foote  
 Fry  
 Galipeau  
 Gaudet  
 Glover  
 Goldring  
 Goodyear  
 Gravelle  
 Guarnieri  
 Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les

**PAIRED**

Members

Bellavance  
 Laforest

Finley  
 Ritz— 4

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

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

\* \* \*

[English]

**INCOME TAX ACT**

The House resumed from April 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-470, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (revocation of registration), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill 470 under private members' business.

● (1825)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 33)

**YEAS**

Members

Abbott  
 Aglukkaq  
 Allen (Weland)  
 Ambrose  
 Anderson  
 Andrews  
 Armstrong  
 Ashfield  
 Asselin  
 Bachand  
 Bains  
 Beaudin  
 Bennett  
 Bernier

Ablonczy  
 Albrecht  
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
 Anders  
 André  
 Angus  
 Arthur  
 Ashton  
 Atamanenko  
 Bagnell  
 Baird  
 Bélanger  
 Benoit  
 Bevilacqua

Harris (St. John's East)  
 Hawn  
 Hill  
 Hoepfner  
 Holland  
 Jean  
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
 Karygiannis  
 Kennedy  
 Kent  
 Komarnicki  
 Laframboise  
 Lalonde  
 Lavallée  
 Lebel  
 Lee  
 Lemieux  
 Lessard  
 Lobb  
 Lunn  
 MacAulay  
 MacKenzie  
 Malo  
 Mark  
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
 Masse  
 Mayes  
 McColeman  
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
 McTeague  
 Mendes  
 Merrifield  
 Minna  
 Mulcair  
 Murphy (Charlottetown)

*Private Members' Business*

Murray	Nadeau
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Pearson	Petit
Plamondon	Poilievre
Pomerleau	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Rafferty
Raitt	Rajotte
Ratansi	Rathgeber
Regan	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Rodriguez
Rota	Russell
Savage	Savoie
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
St-Cyr	Stanton
Stoffer	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thi Lac
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Valeriote
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Vincent	Volpe
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Wasylcia-Leis
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilfert
Wong	Woodworth
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Young	Zarac — 280

**NAYS**

## Members

Bezan

Allison  
Sorenson — 3**PAIRED**

## Members

Finley

Ritz — 4

Bellavance  
Laforest

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

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

\* \* \*

[English]

**CRIMINAL CODE**

The House resumed from April 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-384, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (right to die with dignity), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-384 under private members' business.

● (1835)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 34)

**YEAS**

## Members

Arthur  
Beaudin  
Bigras  
Bonsant  
Brunelle  
Cardin  
Chow  
Crowder  
DeBellefeuille  
Deschamps  
Dorion  
Dryden  
Dufour  
Folco  
Gagnon  
Guay  
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)  
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)  
Laframboise  
Lavallée  
Leslie  
Lévesque  
McCallum  
Mourani  
Ouellet  
Paillé (Hochelaga)  
Paquette  
Pomerleau  
St-Cyr  
Verner

**NAYS**

## Members

Ablonczy  
Albrecht  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambrose  
Anderson  
Angus  
Ashfield  
Asselin  
Bagnell  
Baird  
Benoit  
Bevilacqua  
Bezan  
Blaney  
Bouchard  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Byrne  
Calkins  
Cannis  
Casson  
Christopherson  
Clement  
Comartin  
Crombie  
Cummins  
D'Amours  
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
Dechert  
Devolin  
Donnelly  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)

*Private Members' Business*

Dykstra	Eyking
Fast	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Godin
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Gravelle	Grewal
Guarnieri	Harper
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Holland	Hughes
Jean	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Layton	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukivski	Lunn
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Malhi	Maloway
Mark	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Mayes	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mulcair
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Pearson	Petit
Poillievre	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Rafferty
Raitt	Rajotte
Ratansi	Rathgeber
Regan	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Rodriguez
Rota	Russell
Savage	Savoie
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Stoffer	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thibeault
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Valeriot
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Volpe
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Wasylycia-Leis
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	Wilfert
Weston (Saint John)	Woodworth
Wong	Yelich
Wrzesnewskyj	Zarac— 228
Young	

## PAIRED

## Members

Bellavance Finley  
Laforest Ritz— 4

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

I have received several points of order.

[*English*]

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was rather distracted in the process of voting and voted yes, while I intended to actually vote no. Therefore, I request that my vote be changed.

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Mr. Speaker, on the same matter, I intended to vote against the motion, but I voted for it. I would like permission to change my vote to against it.

**The Speaker:** Is there consent for the hon. members for Vancouver South and York Centre to change their vote from yes to no?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** I am afraid the hon. members might have voted twice, we seem to have had this experience lately, and then they could have chosen. They could have voted yes and then voted no. We have had this happen in the House recently, as they might recall. However, in the circumstances, we will leave the vote as is, but their point of order has been duly noted on the record.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to be recorded as abstaining on this bill. The reason is I believe end of life issues need to be debated more in our country. I believe that life should be the first choice but not the only choice and that we have to ensure that resources and supports are provided to Canadians so that choice is free.

I believe, when all is said and done, the individual is ultimately responsible. I want to make this decision for myself, and if I cannot, I want my family to make the decision. I believe most Canadians, or many Canadians, feel the same. As William Henley said in his poem *Invictus*, "I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul".

● (1840)

**The Speaker:** It being 6:40 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

\* \* \*

## CANADIAN FORCES SUPERANNUATION ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-201, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (deletion of deduction from annuity), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** There are 11 motions and amendments standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-201.

*Private Members' Business*

Motions Nos. 1 to 11 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[Translation]

I wish to inform the House that the motions propose to restore the title and the original clauses of the bill which were deleted in committee.

[English]

I draw members' attention to the fact that according to our practice, the majority of these motions would ordinarily be inadmissible if not accompanied by a royal recommendation. However, they were selected since they propose to restore all of the bill's clauses which were deleted in committee.

That being said, members will recall my ruling of May 12, 2009, in the *Debates* at page 3426, identifying Bill C-201 as requiring a royal recommendation. This ruling would remain in effect should the motions be adopted to amend this bill and restore it to its original form.

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 11 to the House.

## MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-201 be amended by restoring the title as follows:

“An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (deletion of deduction from annuity)”

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-201 be amended by restoring Clause 1 as follows:

“1. Subsection 2(1) of the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act is amended by adding the following in alphabetical order:

“Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings” has the same meaning as in the Canada Pension Plan.”

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-201 be amended by restoring Clause 2 as follows:

“2. Paragraph 5(1)(a) of the Act is replaced by the following:

(a) four per cent of the portion of his or her salary that is less than or equal to the Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings; and”

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-201 be amended by restoring Clause 3 as follows:

“3. (1) Subsections 15(2), (2.1) and (3) of the Act are repealed.

(2) Subsection 15(7) of the Act is repealed.”

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-201 be amended by restoring Clause 4 as follows:

“4. The portion of section 40 of the Act before paragraph (a) is replaced by the following:

40. (1) If, on the death of a contributor who, on ceasing to be a member of the Canadian Forces, was entitled to an immediate annuity or an annual allowance, there is no person to whom an allowance provided in this Part may be paid, or where the persons to whom such allowance may be paid die or cease to be entitled to it and no other amount may be paid to them under this Part, any amount by which the calculated amount, within the meaning of subsection (2), exceeds the aggregate of all amounts paid to those persons and to the contributor under this Part or Part V of the former Act shall be paid”

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-201 be amended by restoring Clause 5 as follows:

“5. Subparagraph 42(1.1)(a)(i) of the Act is replaced by the following

(i) four per cent of the portion of his or her salary that is less than or equal to the Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings, and”

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-201 be amended by restoring Clause 6 as follows:

“6. Paragraph 50(1)(k) of the Act is repealed.”

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-201 be amended by restoring Clause 7 as follows:

“7. Subsection 3(1) of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act is amended by adding the following in alphabetical order:

“Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings” has the same meaning as in the Canada Pension Plan.”

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-201 be amended by restoring Clause 8 as follows:

“8. Paragraph 5(1)(a) of the Act is replaced by the following:

(a) four per cent of the portion of his or her pay that is less than or equal to the Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings; and”

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-201 be amended by restoring Clause 9 as follows:

“9. (1) Subsections 10(2), (2.1) and (3) of the Act are repealed.

(2) Subsection 10(7) of the Act is repealed.”

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-201 be amended by restoring Clause 10 as follows:

“10. Paragraph 26(g) of the Act is repealed.”

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak again to Bill C-201. For those who are listening and for those in the House, I will give a little history on Bill C-201.

About five years ago, three ex-service personnel came to my office and discussed with me the concerns of what they called the clawback of their military pensions at age 65, as well as the Canada pension deductions, or clawbacks when members were disabled and collected Canada pension disability, as related to their superannuation. Those three men were John Labelle, Roger Boutin and Mel Pittman, all of Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia.

These fine gentlemen have petitioned people across the country, to the point where close to 125,000 individuals have written and talked about this issue. The territorial legislature of Yukon is fully supportive of it. The provincial government of Nova Scotia and the other two provincial parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, have all agreed to it in their debates as well.

We are trying to ensure that the men and women who serve our country, the RCMP and the Canadian military, have financial dignity when they require it.

*Private Members' Business*

The premise began in 1966. When the Canada pension plan came into being, the government split the contributions of deductions to superannuation and to the Canada pension plan. The problem was nobody in the military was advised that this would happen to them. This was a decision made without their knowledge and without their consent. It was done on their behalf, not knowing that years later, when they retired, what they would receive was a CPP, Canada pension plan, or QPP, Quebec pension plan, deduction from their superannuation.

We have said very clearly that nobody, when they become disabled or when they turn 65, should lose money.

It fundamentally works like this in the disabled aspect. I know a gentleman who is an RCMP officer. After 30 years of service, he became disabled and had to leave the RCMP. He received 64% of his superannuation and then Great West Life topped it up to 75% by adding an additional 11%. After two years, Great West Life shut it off and then he had to apply for Canada pension disability.

He applied for Canada pension disability and received a lump sum of over \$16,000. The first call he received was from the RCMP annuity branch, which said he owed it over \$11,000. That would have been the deduction if he had received CPP from the beginning. Therefore, he had to pay all that money back. Then Great West Life told him he owed it close to \$7,000 or \$8,000.

Therefore, he received \$16,000 and had to pay back over \$19,000 because Great West Life clawed back all the money it had paid him. When he turns 65, his Canada pension disability will shut off and he will get a reduced CPP, which is deducted from his superannuation. Therefore, he loses money once again. We should not have to tell our heroes, the RCMP and our military, that this will happen to them.

I have spoken to many veterans, their families and RCMP officers across the country. Bill C-201 affects only 96,000 of them. There are 84,000 veterans of the military and 12,000 of the RCMP. We have close to 700,000 military and RCMP individuals who are retired, but this bill only applies to those who have received their superannuation, and they would have had to have served over 20 years to get that. As members know, a few years ago changes were made to the eligibility of an early pension plan and now these members have to serve 25 years to get an earlier pension plan.

Who am I talking about? The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence is a tremendous individual in the House of Commons. He served 30 years in the Air Force and I believe he flew fighter jets as well. The former minister of defence, who I believe now is the whip of the Conservative Party, also was a general. These men have served their country. They are just two in the House, but there are many across the country who have gallantly put their lives on the line so we could all have a good night's sleep.

• (1845)

I remind everybody that when the men and women of the armed forces and the RCMP sign on the bottom line, they have unlimited liability. We in Parliament, whether in government or in opposition, have the ultimate responsibility of looking after their needs.

I have spoken to so many individuals who in their career have moved, in some cases 17 times, across the country and internationally. In many cases their spouses were not able to hold down

jobs. If potential employers found out that the husband, for example, was in the service, they probably would not hire the wife because the family was constantly moving. The spouse lost the opportunity to contribute to his or her own pension plan.

Again, these men and women are the heroes of our country. These are the men and women who allow us to have a good night's sleep. With this bill, I am trying to ensure that their financial needs are met when they turn 65.

Is the government doing anything legally wrong? No, it is not. It is following the rules according to what happened in 1966. That is a fact. If the government were to follow what we have suggested, the average person of the 96,000 I am talking about would receive about \$200 extra a month in total allotment.

What the government has refused to say is that they would receive less in old age security payments and in some cases less in GIS, and that would be a saving for the government. In some cases some of these individuals may end up in a higher tax bracket and would be taxed on that.

Most important, what would the average disabled veterans or RCMP officers or those who retired at age 65 do with these additional funds? They would pump that money right back into the economy.

What we are talking about in many cases is fairness and respect and financial dignity for these individuals when they retire.

Let us go over a few things that have happened this week alone when it comes to our veterans.

There is a long-term care facility in Cape Breton that has been refused money to get a proper kitchen area to feed hot meals to veterans.

We have found out that today one of the hospitals in London, Ontario, will shut down 72 beds over the next year. That is 72 hospital beds for veterans that will no longer be eligible for those we call the modern-day veteran. We also found out that Allied veterans cannot have access to hospital beds in this country.

We also found out that the government is still refusing to have a public inquiry into agent orange, even though it promised that when in opposition.

We also found out that the current Prime Minister, when he was in opposition, promised that all widows and widowers of VIP would receive it, immediately, not some of them and not under strict criteria.

These are some of the problems veterans and their families are having.

I was asked by these three gentlemen, Roger, Mel and John, if there was any way this could be fixed and if legislation could be brought forward to assist them. That is exactly what we have done.

*Private Members' Business*

I do not want members to get me wrong. There are certain things the government has done, with the previous government, to improve the lot of veterans and their families. The new veterans charter is an example of moving the yardsticks forward. Is it perfect? No. That is why committees are examining the veterans charter right now. There is so much more the government could be doing.

What I found quite despicable the other day was the Prime Minister of Canada on Easter Saturday standing at a Calgary food bank and filling up a hamper, a food bank designed specifically for veterans. Under no circumstances should any veteran or family member ever have to go to a food bank. That is despicable, and the Conservatives should hang their heads in shame for that.

The reality is that Bill C-201 is affordable. Even the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence said it would cost about \$100 million, and he is absolutely correct. However, if we take in all the savings the government could have, this is an investment in our veterans and in our RCMP members and their families.

My party and I firmly believe that the men and women who serve our country deserve our greatest gratitude. They deserve to have this bill passed through the House of Commons.

• (1850)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore proposes restoring Bill C-201 to its original form, introduced last year after debate here in the House and lengthy consideration by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. Nothing has changed since the standing committee agreed to remove the proposed clauses. There are some issues that do deserve discussion, and the disability issue is one. However, as for the rest of it, I am sorry. I cannot support the hon. member's motions for the same reasons as before.

[Translation]

This does not take away from the deep respect and immense admiration we have for the Canadian Forces and the RCMP. I am proud of my own service and my comrades, and I am just as proud of the men and women in uniform today. These military personnel and their families make many sacrifices and, in return, the Government of Canada must take care of them. The Canadian Forces pension plan is there to look after our veterans. The system is flexible and generous, which is exactly what the Canadian Forces members deserve.

[English]

In 1966, members of the Canadian Forces were paying 6% of their salaries into their pension plan or CFSA. When the Canada pension plan was integrated with the CFSA, as were all other public service pension plans, CF members continued to pay 6% of their salaries into pension benefits. The only change was that 1.8% now went to CPP and 4.2% went to CFSA.

Upon retirement, a member receives 2% of his or her best five-year average salary per year or partial year of service. The member pays 25% of the cost of that pension and the public pays the other 75%.

Members of the CF typically retire well before age 65. When they collect their CFSA upon retirement, it consists of two parts. The larger part, approximately 70%, is the lifetime benefit. That is the amount from CFSA the member will continue to receive until he or she dies. The smaller part, approximately 30%, is termed the bridge benefit and serves to bridge the pensioner's income at the full 2% per year of service until age 65 when most people start collecting CPP.

At age 65, having done its job, the bridge benefit ceases. In most cases, the amount of CPP that commences will be at least equal to the amount of the bridge benefit that ceases, thus giving the pensioner a consistent income flow throughout retirement years. That is the way it is designed. That is the way it works.

This will not be the case, though, under two circumstances. If the member does not earn taxable income between CF retirement age and age 65, he or she will not have contributed to CPP for that period. In that case, the amount of CPP eligibility will be less and it will likely be less than the bridge benefit that ceases at 65. In most cases, working or not working is a decision the member makes.

Canadians can draw CPP as early as age 60, with a reduction of .5% per month before age 65. If someone took it at age 60, his or her total reduction would be 30%. That is the reduced amount, plus indexing, that the pensioner will receive from CPP for the rest of his or her life. A CF pensioner taking CPP at age 60 will, in effect, be receiving both the bridge benefit and CPP for that five-year period. That is a good thing, but he or she must be prepared for a reduction in overall benefit when the bridge benefit ceases at age 65.

I will repeat, those are the only cases where a person is liable to receive less from CPP than he or she is getting from the bridge benefit. The total pension benefit continues to be indexed and the decision to take CPP early rests with the member.

CFSA and CPP are working exactly as set up and paid for, and they provide for a consistent indexed level of retirement income for CF members and RCMP. The essence of the argument in Bill C-201 is that CF and RCMP pensioners should be able to collect both the bridge benefit and CPP beyond age 65. This would amount to stacking the CFSA lifetime and bridge benefits and CPP, amounting to approximately a 30% increase, even though we have not paid for a stacked pension plan. It is as simple as that.

The cost to implement Bill C-201, and my hon. colleague mentioned part of it, would be prohibitive, with a one-time cost, according to the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, of \$7 billion and annual costs of \$110 million, and increasing. Plan members and Canadian taxpayers would have to bear the burden of the increase in future contributions.

*Private Members' Business*

Are plan members prepared for additional deductions in pay? A soldier making \$50,000 a year would see an increased annual pay deduction of \$1,000. Would it be fair to ask taxpayers to pay the increase? The government has a responsibility to our service members, but we also have a responsibility to Canadian taxpayers to carefully manage the money they entrust to us.

Proponents of Bill C-201 suggest that the annual cost of implementation could be covered by diverting CF members' EI contributions. Annual EI contributions by CF members amount to \$54 million per year, which covers less than half the annual cost. In addition, approximately 3,000 CF members use EI benefits every year for maternity leave and parental leave, and those important benefits would be denied. We care too much about our military families to do that.

Our government has acted. With the Budget Implementation Act 2006, the government approved an amendment that changed the calculation of the lifetime benefit in the recipient's favour. Therefore, the dollar amount reduced at age 65 will be less, resulting in an increased long-term pension benefit.

The very well organized advocates of Bill C-201 propose a number of what are essentially red herrings. They point to the lack of consultation and input by CF members in 1966. The CF is not a union and does not get to vote on pay and benefits. The leadership of the CF makes decisions for the members on their behalf, and that is not going to change.

• (1855)

There is no doubt that communication of the changes was sporadic at best, but since then, efforts have been made to inform our veterans and plan members and answer their questions. There is a website, informative publications, a 1-800 number and briefings upon approaching retirement. Ultimately, plan members are responsible for learning about and understanding their respective pay and benefits.

Some suggest that MPs have exempted themselves from what they call a clawback of the bridge benefit. I am glad the member did not bring it up, but it is on all of the websites. MPs come and go at all ages and do not collect their pensions until age 55, unlike CF members who can collect pensions years earlier. MPs do not collect any bridge benefit from or to any age; therefore, there is simply nothing to claw back. Being an easy target is part of the life of an MP, but it is simply intentionally misleading in this case.

Many point to petitions, as my hon. colleague did, signed by 100,000 or 125,000 people in support of Bill C-201. Anybody will sign a petition that holds an implied promise of more money. I do not suggest that anybody signed in bad faith; they have simply been misled. I have spoken to many former CF colleagues who knew the issue was bogus but signed anyway. Why not? While there are many former senior officers who have signed the petition, there are a great many more who have not signed. These include many former chiefs of the defence staff and leaders who are acknowledged as being strong supporters of the troops. They know it is simply not a legitimate issue.

The last time we debated the bill, I received hundreds of angry emails and phone calls, and I expect there will be more to come.

Some send me their CFSA statements pointing out that at age 65, their CFSA would be reduced by  $x$  dollars per month and that they would lose indexing on that amount. What they do not send me is their CPP statement that says they will receive  $x$  dollars per month and that it will be indexed.

Some propose emotional arguments about how members of the CF have served and sacrificed themselves and their families. That is true, and I can attest to that from personal experience. Canadians respect that sacrifice and are grateful for it, but Canadians serve voluntarily. They are well paid, well treated and get excellent trades training and experience for future employment. I can also attest personally to the relevance and the generosity of the Canadian Forces superannuation plan, and retirement benefits are generous by any contemporary standard. The CF and RCMP plans are set up exactly the same way as all other public service pension plans and most other defined benefit pension plans, such as teachers plans. Where would the dominoes stop and at what cost if the bill were to be implemented?

With respect to our pension plan, our benefit is based on our investment. Members are receiving the full benefit from that investment and the pension plan is working the way it was intended.

Our government has taken our obligations to our veterans very seriously. We have implemented a veterans' bill of rights, veterans' charter and veterans' ombudsman, brought in pension income splitting and many other tax benefits for seniors, addressed the agent orange and atomic vets issues and a host of other points. In fact, we have invested about \$2.1 billion more on our veterans than the previous Liberal administration did.

While we have done much for veterans and serving members, there will always be more to do and more to be considered. The disability issue is in fact a legitimate issue, and one that should be discussed, but it is lumped in with the majority of folks, the 96,000 that my colleague talked about, that have nothing to do with that issue.

Unfortunately, spending an inordinate amount of time on things like Bill C-201 distracts from examining those issues. It is a difficult issue for many, there is no doubt. I can tell hon. members it is no fun being the poster boy with my face on legion dart boards across the country.

We have all had to make tough decisions in our lives and careers and we all try to make them in the most honest and informed way possible.

*Private Members' Business*

As I said at the beginning, nothing has changed. Notwithstanding all of our respect and gratitude for our veterans, the bill is simply unrealistic, not founded on fact and unfortunately we cannot support it.

● (1900)

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-201 and the reintroduction of its clauses at report stage.

I want to begin by thanking the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore for his hard work in this endeavour, for spearheading it and also for his tenacity. The member is known for three things, at least: his tenacity in keeping issues alive before this House and in the community; his commitment to veterans, which is outstanding; and also his compassionate understanding of the needs of veterans and how they relate to ordinary lives of people.

He may also be known for his constructive approach to his role as critic. I want to thank him for keeping that constructive role and ensuring that we continually look at how to improve benefits and programs for veterans. This is part of that process.

As official opposition critic for veterans affairs, it is always an honour and truly a privilege for me to work with and to learn from so many of Canada's bravest and finest men and women. Their courage and integrity as shown to us through their years of active service is outstanding. They lead by example in showing what Canada truly is as a country.

Canadian Forces members and members of the RCMP make this country proud in their service in this country and around the world. Whether they are traditional veterans who are becoming elderly, those from World War II and Korea, or modern veterans from the cold war, from peacekeeping operations, and from failed state operations, and now from Afghanistan and most recently from Haiti, they have earned our respect. They deserve our care and our commitment to their well-being.

Bill C-201 is an act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the RCMP Superannuation Act.

As has been explained by previous speakers, these two forces have superannuation plans that are meant to provide for members of the forces in their retirement years. Those who have served Canada in uniform inside and outside our borders receive annuities upon retirement. Like all pension plans, public and private, these annuities represent deferred income. They represent income that was forgone at one stage of life and the members receive it and accrued interest in earnings later in life. They take less income earlier, pay into a plan and receive it later. This is not some sort of a benefit that is being given to them. This is earned income, forgone income, which the government puts aside on their behalf, instead of receiving higher salaries or wages. It allows them to have a good retirement.

As the hon. member has stated very clearly that that is not the existence for many of our retired members. He spoke of the Calgary Poppy Fund. He spoke of homelessness. He spoke of a number of issues that are plaguing some of our veterans. Financial problems are part of it, but they are not the only problems. There are other problems that veterans face, but financial problems are one of them.

When veterans turn 65, some of them are surprised that the annuity they receive actually goes down by about the same amount as their CPP or QPP when it kicks in. Many of them did not know about it beforehand. Once they are able to receive those benefits at age 65, or earlier due to a disability, they realize that they have had a bridging amount they thought would continue. Many of them are surprised to not receive the full amount of CPP or QPP.

This reduction, as they perceive it, has caused a great deal of consternation in the community.

The hon. member who has presented this bill has continually reminded this House of that, and has done so eloquently and elegantly.

Members in the Liberal caucus who were here supported this bill at second reading to ensure that it received a full and fair hearing at committee. It was sent to committee for further study, consultation and deliberation. The committee did its work. At the end of the process, the Conservative members managed to vote to gut the bill completely. Every part of it was negated.

Today the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore is reintroducing each clause of the bill. We were reminded of his tenacity in doing this, and we offer our respect and our thanks for that.

● (1905)

As the Liberal Party critic for veterans affairs, I have recommended to our caucus that we support the reintroduction of these clauses and support the principles of this bill.

This issue is not uncomplicated. These pension plans are contributory plans. They are actuarially based on the integration of the CPP or QPP and the superannuation funds at hand. The member has advanced several reasons for supporting this bill, not the least of which is the recognition of the very special contribution of the members of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP.

There is not a member in the House on either side, frankly, who does not show a sense of gratitude and commitment that we all have to honour the covenant that has been made with members of our Canadian Forces and the RCMP. There is not a member in the House who does not approach this with great respect and due care and concern for our veterans. These men and women, our soldiers, sailors and air crew, as well as our RCMP officers, have served us and protected us and demand that we consider this fully.

We understand that their commitment and sacrifice is part and parcel of their daily work. We understand it is necessary for their families as well to have the same sense of duty and sacrifice. We understand that this concept is in full what all members of our Canadian Forces undergo from the day they enlist until the day they retire. We know of the hazards, the risks to life and limb that they undertake every day on our behalf. We need to keep the promise to ensure that their retirement years are good years.



*Private Members' Business*

The committee heard all of that and more. Principally the committee heard that the veterans' knowledge of the superannuation plans was not complete. The committee repeatedly heard that the veterans were surprised when they saw the reduction. Whether they should have been surprised or not is not for me to judge. What I saw as veterans came to us was that the documentation was too complex for them to grasp at times, or it was not available or accessible to them in ways they could comprehend, or it was not part of their life experience. They were often young and not considering their retirement years and did not understand the concept of bridging. For this reason our party will be supporting the bill at this stage.

Compounded with the testimony that we heard from these men and women, non-commissioned and commissioned officers, enlisted people and officers from the RCMP was that the information, preparation and readiness for retirement programs offered in years gone by were not adequate. They did not have the needed information.

We have the responsibility to correct that wrong in two ways. We have to ensure that the documentation of superannuation plans is accessible, available and understandable. We also have to correct a wrong for those who have not received the income they thought they were due. The issue of fairness has to do with accessibility, comprehensibility of materials and making sure that people are prepared for their retirement.

The hon. member who has presented this bill has been very effective in mounting a campaign, to which the parliamentary secretary referred. I want to quote from one of the main activists, Mr. John Labelle. He has written:

It is time to put the politics aside and for all Members of Parliament to demonstrate their recognition and appreciation, in a tangible way, to the men and women who have served and are currently serving our country. Take action to terminate this undemocratic, unfair and unjust treatment of Veterans and terminate this pension benefit reduction that has been imposed on them without fair and open consultation. This misguided policy violates the principle of democracy, fairness and justice as it affects the welfare of Veterans and their Families in their Golden Years.

We are all aware there will be financial implications with this bill. It is somewhat disingenuous of the member who has proposed it to not have clearly signalled that to all who are affected by it. This bill will no doubt require a royal recommendation. We will not be able to fulfill this promise unless the Conservative government comes fully on board and supports it. I hope it does so.

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in speaking once again about Bill C-201, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (deletion of deduction from annuity).

Concerned and sensitive as we always are, we are proud to defend veterans and members of the RCMP. In order to ensure that they will be treated fairly, the Bloc Québécois long ago decided to support the bill at second reading so that it would be studied in detail at the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Unfortunately, much to our disappointment and astonishment, once it went to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs we

quickly realized that not only did the Conservatives and Liberals not want to study the bill in detail at that time, but they wanted it gutted. As the member who spoke before me said, veterans should be treated fairly, and this is not the case with the current pension plan.

As hon. members will recall, at second reading of this bill, the Liberals supported it and decided to vote in favour of this measure, so it could be examined in committee.

Unfortunately, on November 17, 2009, when the Conservatives were throwing out all the articles of this good bill introduced by my colleague, Bill C-201, most Liberals decided to abstain, thereby shirking the responsibility they had taken on previously, and in the end, Bill C-201 was defeated. That is why we are seeing this bill again in the House.

Once again, the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore is showing his tenacity and courage by proposing amendments at the report stage, amendments that restore all the articles of Bill C-201.

Of course we will support those amendments, because we are consistent. We supported the bill because we wanted to examine it more thoroughly in committee. We still believe that this bill deserves the support of all members of this House as well as royal assent.

As parliamentarians, we must ensure that all the services provided are of good quality and adapted to the needs of veterans and their families, as a way to recognize what they did for us. That is what we are doing by examining the new veterans charter and Bill C-201.

Therefore, the Bloc Québécois is concerned about compensation for veterans and RCMP personnel when they reach retirement age.

We believe that Bill C-201 partially addresses that concern, because it is designed to put an end to the reduction of pensions for retired members of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP when they reach age 65.

The reduction can be explained by the fact that since 1966, the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the RCMP Superannuation Act have been part of the Canada pension plan, as is the case with all federal public pensions.

When the Canada pension plan was introduced in 1966, most Canadian employers, including the federal government, decided to integrate their pension plans with the CPP rather than maintain two parallel plans.

Bill C-201, introduced by the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, would change that by deleting the deduction.

The government is asking why this bill includes only members of the armed forces and the RCMP.

*Private Members' Business*

●(1915)

I think all parliamentarians will agree that these individuals have played a unique role compared to other members of the federal public service. They have played a special role. The government and parliamentarians must honour what these people have done for Quebec and the rest of Canada. They deserve special treatment, because they have put and continue to put their lives in danger to protect the values our society holds dear.

We believe that Bill C-201 could facilitate an easier transition between military life and civilian life when a member leaves the armed forces.

That said, as I said earlier in my speech, the Bloc Québécois is concerned about how veterans' compensation is affected when they reach retirement age. I am pleased to see that, once again, the Liberals will support this bill. I hope that they will continue to support it at the committee stage. We ask them to remain consistent in their choices. I urge the Conservatives to do the same and to take a serious and thorough look at this bill, while keeping our veterans in mind. I believe that once they examine it more closely they will make the right choice and will support this bill.

The committee wishes to ensure that, three years after its adoption, this charter adequately meets the unique needs of today's veterans and their families. This was another aspect that we studied in committee. This bill is being introduced together with the new veterans charter, that we are currently studying, in recognition of their service.

We have to wonder whether it is reasonable to expect that a veteran can make the best decisions about the measures put forward in this bill. Committee review will allow us to closely examine the potential financial impact and the difficulties faced by veterans under the current pension system.

In the next few weeks, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs will be dealing with a number of matters. The new veterans charter is definitely an important element, but other problems have been identified, especially post-traumatic stress syndrome.

We recently heard from witnesses that many soldiers, upon returning from Afghanistan, have been through very traumatic circumstances and that the Department of Veterans Affairs should provide services that are closer to where they live and more suited to their situations.

Not only do we want our veterans to have an adequate income to ensure their security and quality of life, but they should also be provided with a whole range of services to help them and their families. I believe that in the last budget the government once again missed an opportunity to provide additional support to our veterans. They have serious problems and the government has not increased resources enough to provide them with better services.

In closing, this bill will significantly improve the compensation for our veterans and RCMP members so they can have the type of retirement they deserve for the sacrifices they made during their term of service. For these reasons and in the interest of justice, I invite all members to vote for Bill C-201.

●(1920)

*[English]*

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-201 this afternoon. I also was pleased to hear the comments of my good friend from the Bloc and certainly the new critic from the Liberal Party.

As the member from the Bloc has explained, Bill C-201 made it through second reading with the support of the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc. However, when it went to committee, the Conservatives brought in motions and the Liberals abstained, therefore allowing the Liberal motions to pass and derailing the bill.

Now the member has brought back the motions at this stage, which, I guess, points to how tenacious the member is. He explained in his presentation that this has been a five-year effort on his part where he has had thousands of signatures on petitions. I must say that the veterans have an exceptional champion in the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore. I do not know of any other member in the House, past or present, who would go to that sort of effort, spending five years on a bill that involves potentially a royal recommendation. He is as energized now on this issue as I am sure he was five years ago.

It was not a big surprise when I heard the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence make his speech tonight. Before I got ready for this speech I reviewed *Hansard* on all of the other speakers to the bill in the previous stages. I noticed that the parliamentary secretary was as downcast tonight as he was previously. He has experienced a hornet's nest dealing with this bill sponsored by the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore. Tonight he was talking about how fearful he was of the hundreds and hundreds of emails that would be coming his way tomorrow and the hundreds and hundreds of emails that he had to deal with the last time. I know he is certainly not looking forward to that. The fact is that he has every reason to expect that and should know that is what his party deserves for the way it has acted on this bill.

The Prime Minister was recently in Calgary visiting a food bank for our veterans. The Prime Minister made promises when he was the leader of the opposition. It is easy to make promises but how good is he at keeping these promises? He has been in power now over four years. He promised that he would take care of the agent orange situation. He promised a public inquiry into agent orange. Where is it and when will it happen? It is something that has been swept under the rug and probably will never happen. Certainly, as Brian Mulroney used to say, a sacred trust. This is another broken trust of the government.

Also, we are hearing more stories of veterans hospital beds being closed. I believe the member mentioned some examples today. There may be examples in my home city of Winnipeg as well that the government is contemplating. This is not the signal that the veterans want to hear from the government. They want a government that supports veterans. The member for Sackville—Eastern Shore tells us that 96,000 people are affected by the bill, out of a total of about 700,000 retired military and RCMP personnel.

● (1925)

What we are talking about here is roughly, in a gross sense, around \$200 a month. This \$200 will be spent by these veterans and will flow right back into the economy, which is exactly what we need in the type of fiscal environment that we are in at this stage. Regardless, even if the economy was not in the fragile state it is right now, if we were in a robust part of the economy, the fact of the matter is that this money going to these people will actually be spent. We are not going to see this money squirreled away, it is going to be spent.

This money is owed to and properly due to people who sacrificed themselves in the military. We all know of military families. We all know of children of military members who spent a whole childhood being moved around, three years here, three years there and changing schools. When they do that, the spouses find it very difficult to get jobs because, as the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore mentioned, employers are reluctant to hire somebody who may only be there for a year or two.

These people end up not setting down roots and not establishing long-term careers. When they find themselves at retirement age, they are at a disadvantage. They are not the only segment of society that is disadvantaged. We have a huge section of the seniors population in the country as a whole who are in a disadvantaged situation right now.

It is incumbent on the government to take action, and to take action on pensions. In the last week our leader explained that if we took, I believe, \$700 million, we could raise 400,000 people who are living below the poverty line above the poverty line. Once again, this is all money that will just find its way back into the economy because these people will spend the money. They are not going to squirrel it away, sending it to offshore tax havens or spending it on worldwide cruises and palaces in the Bahamas.

I think that is a much more sensible way to spend our money than to be giving more corporate tax breaks to the banks who, as I have indicated many times before, made \$15 billion last year and are paying their CEOs up to \$10.5 million a year.

Juxtapose that reality to the reality here. We call ourselves a first world country. We should be much more careful when we say things like that, when we treat our seniors, retirees and veterans the way we do.

For some time I have wanted to invite the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore to Winnipeg because we have active legions in Winnipeg. I have three in my home riding. I have Royal Canadian Legion Transcona Branch No. 7 on Regent Avenue, and I have certainly spent a lot of time there. I also have Royal Canadian Legion Elmwood Branch No. 9 at 920 Nairn Avenue, and I have

### *Private Members' Business*

Royal Canadian Legion Prince Edward Branch No. 81 at 300 Trent. While I was an MLA for 23 years, I certainly attended that legion.

All three of those legions would be thrilled to have the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore appear there to speak to them about veterans' issues because he does such a phenomenal job. He is an inspiration to veterans right across the country. There is basically an open invitation on my part for him to come to Manitoba to talk to veterans. I think that would be time well spent for all concerned.

I want to encourage the three opposition parties to stick together on this bill and get the government on side as well.

● (1930)

**Mr. Greg Kerr (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are certainly all familiar with the contents of the bill. The member recognized in putting this forward that, as he said, it requires a royal recommendation. Of course, we know that will not happen.

I know he is sincere in his efforts behind a lot of this, but he knows full well that he and his party voted against most of the budget implementation measures of this government, including many initiatives that would help veterans out very much. I want to remind him that he has not always supported veterans efforts in spite of what has been said.

My main comments are in regard to the comments made by the Liberal Party critic for veterans affairs suggesting that somehow, when this went through the process and got to committee, all of a sudden it was the Conservatives that defeated the action and killed it on the spot.

I would remind the House, as we often do, that this is a minority Parliament and since we have a minority membership in the committee, we needed another party. It was the Liberal Party that determined that this bill should go no further than it did and that was the end of the road. Tonight we are hearing something different.

I would remind the Liberal critic for veterans affairs that his party did flip once when it came to the long gun registry and this is the flop part where one month it is good to be going in one direction and now it is going in another.

I will agree with one of the comments made by everybody and that is that all members of the House support veterans and what they have done for our country. Obviously, we are all very grateful not only for what they have done in the past, the fact that they helped not only support and defend our country, but in the first world war in particular they gave our country its real independence.

This government has renewed its commitment very strongly to the armed forces. Two years ago under Canada's first defence strategy, it put forward a 20-year strategy and framework that supports the personnel, the men and women, in a very tangible way with new equipment and opportunities to do what they do best. These purchases allow them to conduct business on behalf of all Canadians of which we are very proud.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

During today's discussion regarding the pension issue, we want to remind ourselves that pensions are an important part of veterans' lives or anybody's life and that these pensions, like any public pensions, came with bridging that leads into the Canada pension plan. I will get into that in a moment.

Even though we cannot truly repay veterans for all they have done, we must put forward the kinds of initiatives that continue to support them. We are doing that constantly. Each and every year there are new initiatives. As members all know, we brought in the Veterans Bill of Rights, the veterans ombudsman, and the veterans charter. These respect what veterans stand for. These respect what veterans did. It is a constantly moving challenge to ensure we do enough for them.

Do I agree we can never do enough for our veterans? Of course, that is true. We have to constantly be vigilant and aware. As a matter of fact, tomorrow the ombudsman is appearing before the committee and it will hear about many issues where the government and members of the House could do more. His job is not to agree with us but to point out how we can do more for our veterans. That is an important part of the process.

Again, I point out that we are not always going to solve every problem. I know the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore says there is a study on agent orange, but this is the government that actually put in place a payment recognizing the kind of damage and difficulties caused by that whole issue of agent orange that took place so many years ago. If it is enough or not enough, that is an honest, open debate we can continue to have in that regard, but we did act. We did respond appropriately and certainly we try to help where we can.

We also know that there were issues concerning atomic veterans, those who were stuck in testing a long time ago, exercises that were carried out by Great Britain and the United States. We certainly understand that they need to be supported and programs are in place in that regard as well.

I also want to point out that what has been very productive in recent times is that the Department of National Defence and the Department of Veterans Affairs are collaborating and working together, as they should. They are recognizing that it has to be as seamless as possible when our wonderful military people move from active duty into veterans affairs. Joint support units have been set up across the country to ensure as much as we can that we deal with their issues and problems.

Their pensions were set up in a very clear way, although many would agree that the information was not what it should be and we have heard many times before our commitment efforts were made to strengthen the information process.

• (1935)

However, these veterans receive the pension they sign up for, and part of the plan is that when they reach 65, they will take the Canada pension. That is part of the deal. In between the time that they retire and the time they receive the Canada pension, they receive bridging, which tops up the whole process, and with the full understanding that bridging is to carry them to Canada pension, not beyond Canada pension.

Therefore, they are, in effect, receiving exactly what they signed up for. It is a fair process, and at 65 of course, as my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence pointed out, depending upon whether they worked afterwards or whether they took it early at 60, it would have some individual impacts that might vary from one person to another. However overall, it is a process that is fair and many parts of the public service have the same kind of approach as this bridging does.

It is fair in the House to have an active debate. It is fair to raise any recommendations that are worth looking at to help our wonderful veterans out, but it is not reasonable to suggest something that we know is not going to proceed forward because it would be an undue pressure on all the existing military people. Taxpayers all over the country would have to pay a lot more to make up this difference and it sets a trend that indeed goes across other parts of the public service.

Although we certainly support looking at all kinds of initiatives that make the offerings better, and we will continue to debate those, this is certainly not one of those initiatives that our government can support, and therefore, I must say that we will be voting against this particular bill.

• (1940)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business is now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I raised a question in the House on March 10 concerning First Nations University. Essentially, I was asking the minister to reinstate the funding to the university, or whether he was prepared to let the university die. Of course, we know that since that day in March, the government has partially reinstated funding; however, it will simply allow the university to lurch to the end of August, which will ultimately mean its closure.

Rather than use my own words, I want to put the words of some people who will be affected on the record. The First Nations University of Canada Students' Association issued a press release on April 21, saying:

The Students' Association is now calling on the federal government to direct a minimum of \$7.2 million to the institution. "The return of Westerlund [the previous financial officer] is yet another piece of undeniable evidence that the First Nations University has turned the page," said Adams. "The right people are now in charge of our University, there is no reason to withhold restoration of the full federal dollars".

The press release goes on to say:

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"We are on day 29 of the live-in. We won't leave until we know that the First Nations University will be here for years to come. This University is the key to our future," Eashappie said.

What this is about is that First Nations University has made tremendous strides to move to full accountability and transparency. This university is the lifeline for many of these young students.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers has written a letter to the Prime Minister. They say:

—your government is forcing the closure of Canada's only First Nations university — the sole university in Canada based on First Nations traditions and cultures. By refusing to restore full funding for First Nations University, your government will now make it impossible for First Nations university students to study in an institution based on First Nations traditions and cultures. There is a bitter irony in your government's action, coming as it does after the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) has addressed all of the concerns that have been expressed about the University's governance structure and after the FSIN, the First Nations University, the University of Regina and the Government of Saskatchewan have entered into a partnership agreement to ensure proper financial and administrative management of First Nations University. Your government's refusal to restore full funding, which will cause the University to close after August 31, 2010, is an act of disrespect to First Nations peoples in Canada and a continuation of the very practices for which you apologized in June, 2008. We urge you to back up your 2008 apology by restoring full Federal funding to First Nations University immediately so that it can grow and expand, not have to wind down and close.

As I mentioned, the government was not signatory to the memorandum that was signed by the university, by the FSIN and by the University of Regina, that talks about putting in an administrative process that ensures full transparency and accountability. Therefore, my question is this. Instead of cutting this lifeline to First Nations University and its students, why will the government not agree to become party to that memorandum of understanding and reinstate full funding?

This university contributes to the ability of students to go out and earn a living, and without it, it will contribute to the ongoing marginalization and poverty of first nations in Saskatchewan.

**Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments by the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, my colleague on the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Our government remains committed to ensuring that first nations students continue to enjoy the same opportunities as other Canadians. Good education is the key to finding a good job, personal success and a prosperous future.

We did announce a cancellation of funding for the First Nations University of Canada on February 5 because of long-standing and systemic problems related to governance and financial management. The financial officer, who had been terminated by the previous administration and who had identified many of these problems at a time when it was essential, was restored to his office this week. We do have initiatives going forward.

To say that all the concerns have been addressed is political rhetoric, at this point a business plan is still required but has not been forthcoming. Some of the requests we are hearing are quite inappropriate at this moment.

It is a difficult situation for the students. We continue to work with our partners to provide these students with the support they need to complete this academic year ending in August. We are offering moneys, under the Indian studies support program, to an eligible post-secondary institution. At this point, it looks like the University of Regina, which is a signatory to the MOU.

We are continuing to assist first nations and Inuit students through the post-secondary student support program as well. About two-thirds of the students at the First Nations University receive this funding.

Our government recognizes the importance of education for first nations and for all Canadians. We are working with our partners, including the provinces and first nations, to improve outcomes for our post-secondary students.

● (1945)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, what is widely acknowledged is that First Nations University in Saskatchewan provides a unique opportunity for first nations students. What it does is culturally appropriate. This university has expertise in languages in a linguistic program. It has some expertise in health programs. These students are then able to return to their home communities.

I acknowledge there may be some outstanding issues, but we have a memorandum of understanding signed by the University of Regina, the province and First Nations University.

I would encourage the Conservative government to come back to the table to ensure the university does not have to close its doors. What steps will it take immediately to ensure the university can stay open for the school term in September?

**Mr. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I fully comprehend the member's question. As I stated in my first response, the government is primarily concerned with current events, with current students in place, to ensure they get their academic year in. We have yet to receive a business plan going forward. It is difficult to make comments without a business plan.

We look at the recent events very positively, including the reinstatement of Mr. Westerlund.

[*Translation*]

## RURAL REGIONS

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about rural regions. Members will recall that I asked a question a few weeks ago about Service Canada job losses in my riding, Madawaska—Restigouche. These job losses were in the regional offices in Edmundston and Campbellton.

I had very clear reasons for raising the issue in the House. We know that every job counts in the country's rural areas. The minister responded that the government had made many investments in New Brunswick. I was not talking about investments. I was talking about job losses.

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Federal jobs are just as important as any other job. However, during periods of economic recovery, every job in a rural region is important. Federal government jobs contribute significantly to a region's recovery.

Let us not even talk about creating more federal jobs until we have protected the existing jobs. The Conservatives have a tendency to eliminate jobs in the regions, which hurts rural communities. All I asked the government to do was take two steps to stop the bleeding.

First, when a person retires, that vacancy should be filled in the same region, not elsewhere. Second, employment insurance office employees were told that they would have to move to Moncton to keep their jobs. Those positions will be moved.

The minister said that he did not cut any jobs in New Brunswick. That may be true, but he is moving jobs out of rural regions. When people retired, he took those jobs and filled them elsewhere.

I am talking about 28 well-paid federal jobs that would allow some young people in rural regions to find a job when one becomes available. Young people who move away to go to university or college would have the opportunity to move back to their home region. The Conservatives want to take both kinds of jobs and fill them elsewhere.

Before moving on to something else, the Conservatives should take a look in the mirror and admit that they do not respect the rural regions. They do not believe in the rural regions. Their lack of investment proves it. What is more, they eliminate positions in the regions and transfer them elsewhere. It is great that Moncton has jobs. However, I do not want my region to lose jobs.

The sun shines down on everyone and I hope the parliamentary secretary will give us good news today and tell us that the government is reversing the announced cuts and centralization of jobs in employment insurance offices. I hope that federal jobs in Madawaska—Restigouche will stay in the region.

• (1950)

[*English*]

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is certainly my pleasure to respond to the member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

The member is misinforming Canadians. There are no plans to relocate existing HRSDC employees in New Brunswick and no permanent existing HRSDC employees are losing their jobs. His constituents deserve to hear the facts, and not fearmongering.

As with any organization, Service Canada regularly reviews staffing to ensure that Canadians are provided with the best service possible and that taxpayer dollars are used efficiently and effectively. Our government is committed to ensuring that all Canadians across the country, regardless of what region, have timely access to benefits and are provided with excellent service.

Let me clear. There are no plans to relocate existing HRSDC employees in New Brunswick and no permanent existing HRSDC employees will lose their jobs. Service Canada employees are working hard to ensure that Canadians access their benefits and to

provide information on a wide range of government programs and services. They are to be applauded for their work.

The member for Madawaska—Restigouche says that he is concerned about protecting jobs in rural New Brunswick. His actions do not match his words. Our Conservative government, through the economic action plan, is creating and protecting jobs right across the country and we are helping Canadian get the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow. For example, our unprecedented investments in infrastructure and housing are creating jobs and improving communities right across our great country of Canada. In addition, over one million Canadians received access to skills training last year alone, thanks to our government's record investment.

The economic action plan also enhanced the work-sharing program which, since February 2009, has protected jobs of over 255,000 Canadians. There are currently 600 jobs being protected in the member's province of New Brunswick. Budget 2010 extended the work-sharing program an additional year. Shockingly, the Liberals and that member did not support it. They did not support protecting the jobs of Canadians so they could continue to put food on the table for their families.

What matters most is that our investments are showing results. Last month alone, 18,000 new jobs were created. March marked the sixth month of job gains in the past eight months. Since 2009, Canada has created almost 180,000 new jobs. The member should be helping us create and protect jobs in his riding instead of misinforming Canadians.

The member for Madawaska—Restigouche also says that he cares about rural Canadians. Do his actions match his words? For example, an issue that is very important for rural Canadians is the gun registry. There is currently a private member's bill put forth by a Conservative member to scrap it. At second reading, the member voted in support of the bill to get rid of the registry. He voted to scrap the long gun registry because his constituents, like mine, did not support it.

However, his leader has now said that he will force all Liberal members to vote to keep the registry, even if it is against the wishes of their constituents. Will the member defy his leader and stand with his constituents or not? Will the member listen to his constituents, who elected him and vote to scrap the ineffective and wasteful long gun registry, or will he follow the Liberal leader, who is out of touch with rural Canadians and wants to punish law-abiding citizens.

The record of the Liberal Party speaks for itself. The Liberals are out of touch with the needs of rural Canadians. The fact is no federal government has done more for rural Canadians than our government, and it is only our Conservative government that will continue to stand up for rural Canada.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

• (1955)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Mr. Speaker, I know I do not have much time, but today there is proof of what I said. The parliamentary secretary cannot even use all his time to show that the Conservatives are going to save jobs in my region. He has had to talk about all sorts of other things, but in reality, he has said nothing about job losses or relocations here.

Here is an example. Seven of the nine people in the Edmundston employment insurance office will retire in the next few years. These seven positions will not be filled. The people in the two remaining positions will have to take positions currently held by temporary employees, who will lose their jobs. The permanent positions in the EI office will be moved to another region. That is clear.

Will the parliamentary secretary promise this evening that the jobs of people who retire will be filled by people in the same region, and will still be attached to employment insurance operations, so that jobs are kept in the region? Yes or no?

[*English*]

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, let me repeat what I said, and I was very clear. There are no plans to relocate existing HRSDC employees in New Brunswick and no permanent existing HRSDC employees will lose their jobs. That is the fact. In fact, we have created jobs throughout Canada in various regions, including the province of New Brunswick in which the member resides. We are committed to ensuring that Canadians all across the country, regardless of what region they live in, have timely access to benefits and are provided with excellent service.

That is what we are doing. I would urge the member to focus on the facts, to focus on what matters to constituents, issues like creating jobs, protecting jobs and scrapping the long gun registry.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am following up on a question that I asked regarding what can only be called a crisis in student unemployment in this country. Student unemployment is double the national average and the response of the government has been inadequate and really quite pathetic.

According to CASA, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, there has been a loss of \$512 million annually in student earnings. According to an EPI report that came out this year, 60% of students are worried about having enough money to go back to school next fall.

The very simple answer for this is the Canada summer jobs, formerly known as the summer career placement program. This was a plan introduced by the former Liberal government and it works fabulously. It is a win-win situation because it employs students, like the bright young pages who work in the House here, and it provides them with the money they need in order to go back to school.

It also supports worthy community organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, child care organizations, youth recreation like the Dartmouth United Soccer Club and St. George's Tennis Club and all the things that provide opportunities for our kids. The problem is that

the present government changed the plan when it came in, thinking that it could get rid of a Liberal plan and bring in a Conservative plan. It butchered the program. There was an outcry and the government had to backtrack. It was because the Liberals in the House stood time after time and gave examples of how this program had worked for years in their communities but that it was no longer working. The government had to backtrack on that and it did so when Monte Solberg was the minister.

There is a reason that it is a good program now. What better stimulus could we have than a program that provides opportunities for students? Education and innovation are the things that will drive Canada's economy. A significant investment in Canada summer jobs would have done that but it also would have helped those communities at the ground level.

The government's response was pathetic. It is a \$100 million program and the government added \$10 million, a rounding error these days when one considers that the government spent \$100 million just to put signs up to talk about the stuff that it did. What did \$10 million mean? It meant an increase of 3,500 jobs this year. Last year, there were 128,000 less student jobs than the year before. We are losing 128,000 jobs for students, the people we need to go back to school so that they can continue to build this great country and make it even better, and the government offers 3,500 jobs.

Ninety-seven percent of students get nothing from the government. It was the perfect solution. I even made a suggestion to the minister at committee. The parliamentary secretary who will respond would have been there. I told him the minister to double it. The way the government is spending money and adding to our deficit, this is the best investment it could have made. The Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Boys and Girls Club would have thanked the government for it and it would have employed students. It could have employed almost 40,000 more students for a reasonably small investment by the standards of the government and the way it throws money around. Instead, it invested 10% and we have a crisis now.

We have students who cannot get work. Many of them may not be able to go back to school and will certainly have to scramble in order to do it. Those community organizations will suffer. There are all kinds of students who need work and all kinds of organizations that need help. It was the perfect marriage. The government ruined the marriage.

• (2000)

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. member has been but he has not listed the various programs that we have specifically designed for youth or mentioned the fact that we have invested over \$100 million in specific initiatives related to youth in budget 2010.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

When we look at the various programs I would invite the member to study and understand them. This effort that we have with respect to young people is between 11 federal departments and agencies and it helps young Canadians develop their skills, get career information and gain valuable work experience.

Through budget 2010, we are putting an additional \$60 million into the strategy's career focus and skills link program. This additional funding for career focus will provide support to Canadian employers willing to offer career-related work experience to college and university graduates. The new money for the skills link program will go to organizations that help young people who face special barriers to employment. This could include young people with disabilities, those who live in rural or remote areas or those who have not completed high school.

Just last week, in my home constituency in the town of Whitewood, the federal government partnered with the Saskatchewan government, the Saskatchewan Tourism and Economic Council, the local community of Whitewood, the Cowessess First Nations and local employers to ensure these young people had jobs through significant investments. When I was there watching them, three months into the program I could see the confidence that was instilled in them with the potential that they will have jobs.

The Canada summer jobs program is a good program. It does help not-for-profit organizations, the public sector, small businesses and the private sector to create summer jobs and summer job opportunities for students. It offers vital community services. However, the total program funding over two years is \$107.5 million, hardly a rounding figure. We added to that program an additional \$10 million last year and an additional \$10 million this year. If we look at the overall program we see that 37,500 jobs have been created across Canada, many of them in the member's own riding and ridings right across the country.

To be fair, if it is not a Liberal program it does not mean that it is good or bad. We take it and improve on it. If the member were to ask anyone in any constituency he would hear that this program is well received. It is a program that helps students right across the country to gain valuable work experience while making a meaningful contribution to the community. Another 3,500 new jobs were attributed directly to the economic action plan on top of what I have spoken about.

Budget 2010 provides further investments to support young people, including \$10 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to support the next generation of business leaders. These young people are starting businesses and employing people. We invested \$20 million for pathways to education, a program that works with disadvantaged young people. The YMCA and YWCA are sharing a \$15 million grant from the federal government for their youth echo internship program. Up to 1,000 young people will gain work experience through paid placements and so on.

Through the economic action plan, we are providing another \$20 million over two years to increase student employment in the public service. When we start adding up these numbers, both the numbers of students who have jobs and the amount of money that is being

invested, it is a significant amount. During a recession period, over \$100 million have been added in the budget to deal specifically with young people. It is hardly a rounding figure and hardly a small investment.

● (2005)

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, on the Canada summer jobs program, the member said that his government had improved it. However, that is clearly not the case. It is so laughable because when it tried to put the Conservative mark on it, its own members came to me and said that I should keep the pressure up because their government made a huge mistake and they needed to go back.

Eventually we went back, as one of the officials said at committee, to the original Liberal program. The numbers were 128,000 less jobs for students last year from the year before. That trend will continue. Some 60% of students are worried about how to pay for their education. The Conservatives are boasting about \$10 million. That is \$10 per student in Canada. That will pay for lots of tuition. That is amazing.

The Conservatives have done virtually nothing for student unemployment. I am talking about creating jobs for students. That is one of the most important things that we can do. Helping organizations in the community is just as valuable. We have a win and a win. We help the community, the students and, more important, the country because we are educating Canadians. It is the best possible solution but the Conservatives chose not to do it. It is a shame for Canadian students.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member to count the number of student positions that are created in his own riding, and he will see the numbers in a practical way.

In terms of student education through the Canada student loans and grants program, we have done a lot to make post-secondary education accessible and affordable for all Canadians. We have already provided \$2.3 billion in loans and grants to more than 390,000 students since August 2009. We have allowed students to have grants of \$250 per month and \$150 per month, covering, if my memory serves me right, over 143,000 more students than under the previous Liberal government.

All is not bad. He should have a look at the big picture and see that significant changes have been made to the benefit. I know that key changes have been made to student financial assistance, so that students get more money that they do not have to pay back, and when they do have to pay it back, they have a repayment assistance program that has been well received by the student associations and student bodies.

I do not know where this member has been. He should perk up, listen and learn something from them.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:08 p.m.)







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