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Monday, October 31, 2011

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 31, 2011

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC) moved that Bill C-313, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (non-corrective cosmetic contact lenses), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, today, I am honoured to speak in support of my private member's bill, Bill C-313, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (non-corrective cosmetic contact lenses), in order cosmetic or decorative contact lenses under the same medical device regulations as corrective contact lenses.

I thank the professionals within the eye care community who have contacted my office in recent weeks with their kind words of support for my private member's bill.

Each member in the House today has representatives of the eye care industry in their riding, and I hope members will heed their warnings about the dangers of the incorrect use of decorative contact lenses that we are hearing more about each day in news reports and medical studies.

Bill C-313 has gained the support of three eye care organizations representing various professionals from the eye care industry. The Canadian Association of Optometrists, the Opticians Association of Canada and the Canada Ophthalmological Society are important stakeholders in any discussion on eye care related to their profession.

Today, I intend to share medical evidence with hon. members that will show the clear need for the provision sought after by Bill C-313.

Before we discuss Bill C-313 further, I want to take members back to a different time and place, to the autumn of 2007 in the 39th Parliament of Canada. It was during that period that the concerns of eye care professionals from across Canada were first brought to my attention. At the time, I was an active member of the Standing Committee on Health.

There were many concerns that were brought forward to the parliamentarians on that committee, and while all the concerns were important, I was particularly seized by the concerns that were brought to me by the professional eye care organizations in relation to the lack of regulatory oversight on what were called non-corrective cosmetic contact lenses.

It is very easy to break down the main concern brought forward to me all those years ago. A cosmetic contact lens is identical to a corrective lens in terms of its impact on the human eyeball, with the only difference being that it does not correct a sight imbalance.

However, despite the fact that they are identical to a corrective lens, these cosmetic lenses were and, to this day, continue to be free of regulatory oversight similar to the provisions in place for corrective lenses.

It was with this simple fact in mind that I began work in 2007 to further understand the risks of cosmetic contact lenses. We must remember that cosmetic, decorative and plano contact lenses are all referring to the same product. I will use all three terms in my discussion today.

After extensive study, liaising with health researchers and eye care professionals, meeting with our own experts from Health Canada and engaging with the opposition health critics, I developed a strategy that would ensure that Canadians' eye health would be protected. The result was private member's Motion No. 409, which proposed that cosmetic lenses should be classified as medical devices and be regulated accordingly under the Food and Drugs Act.

The actual text of Motion No. 409 read as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, the Minister of Health should regulate non-corrective, cosmetic contact lenses as medical devices under the Hazardous Product Act or the Food and Drugs Act.

The motion passed unanimously on March 7, 2008, in a fractured minority Parliament, no less, which I believe is a testament to the fact that this is not a political issue. Rather, we are discussing a human health issue that could impact many Canadians, especially our youth, which I will speak to shortly.

Due to the importance of the motion to Canadians' health, I was able to obtain the full support of all the opposition parties and their health critics, in addition to the support of the government and the Minister of Health. Today, I seek that same support from across the aisle.

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I was pleased that the government acted upon the unanimously passed motion. It was in 2008 that the Government of Canada, upon advice from Health Canada, introduced my motion as an amendment to the omnibus Food and Drugs Act amendment in the former Bill C-51, which was introduced in April 2008, but which also died on the order paper upon the election in the fall of 2008.

It was unfortunate that having already had my private member's spot used in the 39th Parliament, I found myself near the bottom of the long private members' business list. This meant I would not have the ability to bring this legislative change forward for some time.

Moving ahead to late 2010, now in the 40th Parliament, it became evident that I would possibly have the ability to bring forward private members' business. Knowing that I had unfinished business, I reached out to the professional eye care organizations to begin discussions on the types of legislative remedies that could be brought forward.

● (1110)

My main concern was to ensure that my private member's bill would adequately and fully address the concerns held by myself, other parliamentarians and thousands of eye care professionals across Canada.

Of course, we have had another election since then and, upon being re-elected by the citizens of Sarnia—Lambton, I found myself returning to a new House of Commons in the 41st Parliament. I also found myself near the top of the list for private member's business, meaning that months of research and effort through my office were about to be realized in terms of finally bridging the regulatory gaps that exist for decorative non-corrective lenses.

The culmination of this long process now stands before the House of Commons for debate. With this brief background on my bill now before the House, I would like to discuss Bill C-313, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (non-corrective cosmetic contact lenses), with everyone today.

I can sum up the situation regarding the need for my legislation in one sentence regarding non-corrective cosmetic lenses. National distribution of these products without professional oversight, fitting and training significantly increases the risk of public harm.

The difference between 2007, when I first brought my private member's motion forward, and 2011, is that I now have the peer reviewed medical evidence to back up my claim. Today, we now know that the warnings on cosmetic lenses dating back to October 23, 2000 by Health Canada are, in fact, quite well warranted and now demand a legislative recourse to alleviate the potential harm that could be done to consumers of these products.

To some, it may seem that to deem a decorative lens as a harmful product is somewhat overreaching, yet eye care professionals and medical researchers have shown otherwise. A short list of the complications that could occur due to unsafe handling and wearing an improperly fitted lens in one's eye, along with the lack of professional oversight when these products are initially obtained by the consumer, includes the following: conjunctivitis, corneal abrasions, giant papillary conjunctivitis, microbial keratitis and other forms of bacterial, allergic and microbial infection as specified by the eye care industry.

Already we know that these complications all occur with prescribed corrective lenses, which is exactly why Health Canada regulates the use of these product through opticians and regulatory bodies. What has now been shown as fact through peer reviewed studies is that non-prescribed decorative or cosmetic lenses are much more likely to cause complications to users for a combination of factors, including lack of oversight on the product for the consumer in terms of how to use the product and in terms of the potential quality of the product.

It should be noted that some businesses import cosmetic lenses from parts of the world where production of the device to be fitted into a human eye does not necessarily take the best precautions in terms of the quality of their product, leading to the rise of bacterial infections and microbial issues. These companies make large profits off a consumer base that is woefully unaware of the potential harm they are causing to their own eye sight.

A recent search on the Internet for cosmetic contact lenses Canada brought up over one million hits. The top hits on the search were for several large marketing and distributing companies that sell cosmetic lenses made in certain regions not as well-known as Canada for having strong consumer protection measures. This is extremely concerning and we can be sure that the regulatory oversight that Bill C-313 would provide should help to shed some light on the businesses that are importing and providing these products to consumers with little to no oversight or concern for the consumer of their product.

To date, we have now seen several studies on the issue of decorative lenses and the harm they can cause to consumers. Perhaps the most well-known study in Canada is the human health risk assessment of cosmetic contact lenses conducted by Dillon Consulting Limited, also known as the Dillon report. The final assessment was submitted to Health Canada in September 2003 and it outlined the scientific evidence, which at that point was still being debated by public health officials, that the level of risk associated with the use of cosmetic contact lenses was comparable to that associated with corrective lenses and maybe potentially higher. The main issue here is that corrective lenses are subject to professional monitoring and proper regulatory oversight. Cosmetic lenses are not.

● (1115)

The Dillon report also called for the following risk management strategies: individual screening should take place before a cosmetic lens is sold to a customer; proper fitting should be ensured; adequate instruction on cleaning and sterilization should occur; familiarization with recognition of potential symptoms related to the condition of the eye; and, regular aftercare.

To date, not one of the suggested risk management strategies called for in this report have been adopted, while corrective lenses are strictly defined by Health Canada. With this in mind, we must all ask the question why this has been allowed to occur for so long despite the long-standing pleas of the eye care industry and medical researchers.

To recap our discussions thus far, the main concerns Bill C-313 seeks to redress is that cosmetic or decorative cosmetic lenses are being dispensed without a prescription or fitting from unlicensed vendors. Consequently, uninformed lens wearers are experiencing acute, vision threatening infections and inflammation.

This has now become an accepted fact due to a recent study that appeared in *Acta Ophthalmologica*, the official medical journal for optometrists and ophthalmologists in Europe. In this study, research conducted at the Department of Ophthalmology at Strasbourg University Hospital in Strasbourg, France, clearly indicated that:

Patients who acquire CosCL are less likely to be instructed on appropriate lenses use and basic hygiene rules. Consequently, CosCL wearers are experiencing acute vision-threatening infections.

The study in question focused on a bacterial infection known as microbial keratitis, a common yet preventable infection that can occur in wearers of contact lenses, both corrective and non-corrective cosmetic varieties. This study has shown that wearers of cosmetic lenses were at higher risk, with 79% of the controlled group of cosmetic contact lens wearers suffering from corneal scraping. However, the study showed that only 51% of corrective contact lens wearers suffered similar affects. Meanwhile, more than half of the cosmetic lens wearers who were shown to have suffered corneal scraping were also shown to have serious microbial infection as well in the eye.

The study concludes that the increasingly documented risks of easily accessible cosmetic contact lenses were a serious concern in France where the study took place.

There is no reason to believe that the situation is any different in Canada. The Dillon report of 2003, which, in many ways, served as a groundbreaker on this issue, also came to the same conclusions as the French study in 2011.

Considering the medical evidence that clearly shows the need for the provisions contained in Bill C-313, it is important to note that Canada is at least a decade behind other jurisdictions such as the United States and Europe in achieving proper regulations for cosmetic, decorative or plano lenses.

No matter what we want to call them, it is scientific fact that there are issues with these lenses being improperly sold and used in our nation. The risk was sufficient enough that, in 2000, Health Canada issued a public health warning. In 2003, a human health risk assessment was conducted. In 2008, this House of Commons unanimously agreed with the viewpoint that cosmetic lenses were indeed a risk to Canadian consumers and that we must take action.

Although I have spoken at great length as to the risks of cosmetic contact lenses and, therefore, the need for the provisions of Bill C-313, I will share with the House a quote from Dr. Lillian Linton, president of the Canadian Association of Optometrists, who stated:

Private Members' Business

This is about people's eyesight...and in most cases young people's eyesight! There are daily news stories from around the world about the complications that can arise due to ill-fitting cosmetic lenses or improper use and handling. It is an important vision health issue and the optometrists, opticians and ophthalmologists of Canada are asking for unanimous support from the House, Senate and Health Canada to adopt this amendment and enact it with haste.

I could not agree more with Dr. Linton.

The time has come for us as parliamentarians to join together to support Bill C-313 so that we can ensure that much needed oversight is finally brought forward. In doing so, Canada can reclaim the proper regulatory powers over the importers of these products who so callously flood the Canadian market while doing untold damage to hundreds of thousands of young Canadians' eyes, completely unbeknown to most consumers, unfortunately.

With this in mind, I call on parliamentarians in the House today to stand in support of Bill C-313.

● (1120)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sarnia—Lambton very much for her excellent and very well-written bill. I do have a concern, however, and I have a question for the Conservatives.

We have seen the Conservatives neglect all issues related to the health of Canadians. Why is this measure coming from a single member instead of the government? Does the Conservative government not think it has a role to play in protecting the health of Canadians, especially when it comes to vision? I thank the member for answering my questions.

[*English*]

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Mr. Speaker, this is an issue I brought forward in 2007. It was a private member's motion that was supported unanimously by the House. It was not only supported by the House, it was also supported by the government and Health Canada. That motion was put into Bill C-51 that was before the House. If it had not been for the fact that the bill died on the order paper because of an election, this would already be in legislation.

The government does support it. It has tried to bring it forward. It is not a case of the government not supporting it, or being negligent by not doing this. There has been support all the way through on this bill and on this issue from Health Canada and the government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has been somewhat supportive of the bill and we appreciate the member's efforts in bringing it forward.

The member touched upon a very serious issue. Many consumer advocates and others would see the merit in the bill, but there is another issue dealing with our eyes and vision. That is the whole concept of laser surgery, which is becoming more and more commonplace.

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I wonder if the member could give us her thoughts in terms of what role government might have to play in this whole area that is relatively new to our health care system? Does she believe there is any merit in looking at ways in which we can support laser eye treatment, whether it is the federal government or provincial government?

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that is definitely not addressed by the bill before the House today. Personally, I know of several people who have had laser surgery. I know of several people who have had it very successfully, but I have not done research into it. I certainly am not qualified to speak on it.

I feel that is something that is another topic. Definitely, the government is extremely interested in improving the health of all Canadians, whether it be eye health, or whatever. Therefore, if the issue was studied and it seemed to have merit, then that is a topic for another day. However, right now this bill deals with cosmetic contact lenses.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Sarnia—Lambton for this very good private member's bill.

I am the father of two young daughters, 11 and 7. One will be 12 tomorrow. Happy birthday, Sarah. I will get that on the record now.

I am particularly concerned about young people using cosmetic contact lenses for decoration, even for play. Is there anything specifically in the bill that is targeted to keep children, in particular, safe from the use of cosmetic contact lenses?

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and wish Sarah a happy birthday as well.

Certainly, we know that there are a tremendous number of young people who make use of cosmetic contact lenses. It is a coincidence the bill is being introduced today on Halloween. We know that Halloween is a time when so many young people, as well as those who are not so young, make use of cosmetic contact lenses. They use them for a variety of reasons.

This bill would ensure that cosmetic contact lenses were regulated the same as corrective contact lenses. Therefore, it is seen very much by the eye care professionals, and by Health Canada, as being an extremely protective measure for our young people and the health of their eyesight.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank the member for Sarnia—Lambton for her bill. This bill must be included in Health Canada's regulations.

I will explain the issue here. In Canada, corrective contact lenses, which are different than cosmetic contact lenses, are currently regulated by Health Canada, in the category of class II medical devices. There are risks associated with wearing contact lenses, especially if they are not used properly and if people do not know how to handle them and take care of them. I will speak about these risks later on. It is important for corrective contact lenses to be in this category.

In Canada, there is a small loophole in the system when it comes to cosmetic contact lenses. Today is Halloween and some people are wearing contacts that look like cat eyes to hide their irises. These are what we refer to as cosmetic contact lenses. Right now, these contact lenses carry the same risks as corrective contact lenses, but they are not covered by the regulations. People who have vision problems must consult an optometrist to get a prescription. They then purchase their contact lenses from a health professional, who will teach them how to use them and how to take proper care of their contact lenses, which helps prevent health problems.

Right now, cosmetic contact lenses are not regulated. People who want to buy cosmetic contact lenses for different reasons can purchase them anywhere—on the Internet, at a beauty salon, and so on. The lack of regulations is part of the problem.

Many such cosmetic contact lenses can be found on the market and are of poor quality. Contact lenses should allow oxygen to flow to the eye, but lesser-quality cosmetic contact lenses can deprive the eye of oxygen, which can lead to problems. If people are not properly informed about how to care for their contact lenses, they might use them incorrectly. When contact lenses are prescribed by an optometrist, they are custom-made—each eye is even different. Wearing unregulated cosmetic contact lenses poses a greater risk because they are not fitted to the eyes.

The risks associated with using contact lenses incorrectly include allergic reactions, bacterial infections, inflammation of the cornea, cornea ulceration or abrasions, vision problems, and even blindness or the loss of an eye. These are very serious risks. Ideally, these risks would not result in the loss of an eye. However, when the misuse of contact lenses damages the cornea, the effects can be felt within the first 24 hours.

Since it is primarily young people who wear these contact lenses for esthetic reasons, they run a greater risk of having their symptoms misdiagnosed and not taking care of their eyes properly. In addition, if the diagnosis comes too late, the problem could be difficult to treat and, in some cases, could even lead to permanent blindness. That is the worst-case scenario, which we want to avoid.

The NDP and the Conservatives are not the only ones asking for the law to be changed. For the past 10 years, the Canadian Association of Optometrists, the Canadian Ophthalmological Society and the Opticians Association of Canada have been issuing warnings specifically to urge the government to pass legislation on this.

• (1130)

I am very pleased that the Conservative member is reintroducing her bill. It was a shame that it died on the order paper. Today being Halloween, it is the peak time for the use of cosmetic contact lenses. It is too bad this legislation is not covering this time of year when there is an increased use of cosmetic contact lenses, but I hope this bill will be able to help young people next Halloween and provide them with good vision health.

Private Members' Business

I would also like to quote Dr. Lillian Linton, President of the Canadian Association of Optometrists. I believe it is important to seek expert advice on this, especially when this association has been calling for legislative amendments for 10 years. She said:

This is about people's eyesight...and in most cases young people's eyesight! There are daily news stories from around the world about the complications that can arise due to ill-fitting cosmetic lenses or improper use and handling.

Dr. Linton also said that this is an important vision health issue and that the optometrists, opticians and ophthalmologists of Canada are asking for unanimous support from the House, the Senate and Health Canada to adopt this amendment and enact it quickly. I am also pleased that Health Canada is willing to amend the legislation.

I will share some statistics to help the House understand how important it is to pass this bill. Among the users of corrective lenses—I am not talking about cosmetic lenses—the rate of serious injury is 1%, which is not insignificant. Those who have had a prescription for specialty contact lenses have received instructions from their health care professional on how to insert them, take care of them and remove them. Even among people who use those types of contact lenses, 1% of them have the serious injuries I was referring to earlier. The general rate of complication is roughly 10%. It is therefore very important that these contact lenses, whether they are cosmetic or corrective, be prescribed by a health care professional and delivered by a qualified person who can explain how to wear them properly.

Researchers in France recently conducted a very interesting study. They found that the risk of eye infection caused by wearing contact lenses was 12 times greater for people who wear cosmetic lenses than for people who wear corrective lenses. This again shows that people who have not been given instruction on their proper use have a greater risk of suffering health problems, which could further tax our Canadian health care system. No one here wants that.

Things are different in the United States. It had the same problem as Canada. Cosmetic contact lenses were not regulated. In 2005, the U.S. passed legislation, almost the same as the legislation proposed, for cosmetic contact lenses to be considered class II medical devices. I would have liked Canada to take the lead in this regard, but at least we can improve the vision health of Canadians.

The recent U.S. study indicated that contact lenses, both cosmetic and corrective, are the main cause of lesions in children over 11. This statistic indicates how important it is to pass this bill.

In closing, I would like to remind members that it is important that the House pass this bill. The House had already unanimously passed a similar bill, which unfortunately died on the order paper. I hope all members will support the bill.

I again thank the member for Sarnia—Lambton for reintroducing her bill, which will protect the vision of all Canadians who wear contact lenses, especially young children.

• (1135)

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this private member's bill in the name of the member for Sarnia—Lambton is excellent and the Liberals will be supporting it.

This is a long time in coming. It is almost a decade since the 2000 health warning issued by Health Canada with regard to cosmetic contact lenses and regulations have not been established. What the hon. member is doing is very important. She is attempting to move cosmetic contact lenses into class II of the medical devices regulations. This means they would be treated the same way as corrective contact lenses are treated.

These measures would do a few things. They would manage the quality of products. They would regulate the distribution of contact lenses. They would increase awareness of the damage that cosmetic contact lenses can do. The member spoke to the damages which could ensue, such as, infection, vision loss and corneal damage. Those things come about because cosmetic contact lenses that are sold at the corner store or as cosmetic products and nothing more will fit badly. Ill-fitting contact lenses can cause major problems. They may also be improperly handled or housed in an inappropriate container which could cause infection. Most young people do not think they are real. They treat them like cosmetics and tend not to handle them properly. If people want to use them on Halloween, for example, they are going to look for the cheapest products and will probably buy products that are made from substandard materials which are to be used once and thrown away.

This is an important issue. It is about preventing vision loss. As the member said, the Canadian Association of Optometrists and the Opticians Association of Canada support this bill, as does the Canadian Ophthalmological Society. They say that this has been a long time coming.

In 2003 Health Canada issued a report on the risk assessment of wearing cosmetic contact lenses. Cosmetic contact lenses are relatively new, so there is no body of data going back 20 years looking at a longitudinal study of it. We know enough now to know that contact lenses, whether they are corrective or cosmetic, can interfere with the flow of oxygen to the cornea. It could cause swelling or ulceration of the cornea, which could lead to inappropriate vision entirely.

Debris or dirt can get under contact lenses if they are not handled carefully, such as if they are thrown on a table and picked up again. Micro particles can abrade the wearer's corneas. Dirt and debris can get underneath ill-fitting contact lenses. There can be chemical or allergic reactions. There can be contamination of the lenses from micro-organisms, again due to inappropriate handling when putting them in. People can get ulcerative keratitis from repeated infection of the cornea, which ultimately could lead to blindness.

It is interesting to note that contact lenses can cause a temporary change in the shape of a person's corneas. This would necessitate the use of corrective glasses because the person's corneas have changed over a period of time.

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That sounds horrendous, but it is why contact lenses should be dispensed by a licensed and trained professional, such as an optician, optometrist or ophthalmologist, to ensure proper fitting, supervision and education on how to handle contact lenses.

A study in the United States showed that 79.2% of cosmetic contact lenses were illegally sold, as opposed to about 10% of prescription contact lenses which were sold illegally. There is a black market for the sale of cosmetic contact lenses. They are seen to be used for cosmetic purposes only and used only once or twice. Contact lenses have a 33% incidence of corneal ulcers, which is a particularly high percentage, and a 20% incidence of corneal abrasions.

• (1140)

What is important about this bill is that it is a preventive measure. It could prevent blindness, and I am not being hysterical in saying that. The hon. member was very clear about some of the things and this is what opticians, optometrists and ophthalmologists are now saying. This is an important first step.

While we have no control over provincial governments, passing this bill could encourage them to look at this issue. They are the ones with the authority to regulate cosmetic lenses. They could make the regulations the same as those that deal with prescription lenses. That would be the next step we hope would happen. That would mean there would be regulations regarding who could prescribe and dispense cosmetic contact lenses. This is the ultimate result which I think my hon. colleague is hoping to achieve.

Young people tend to use cosmetic contact lenses a lot. They may want to have green eyes when they go to a party, or cat's eyes on Halloween. They do not understand the danger and the damage that could occur. Sixty per cent of the people in theatre who wear contact lenses to change their look as part of their make-up get eye infections from using cosmetic contact lenses, as opposed to 13% who have corrective contact lenses that were prescribed by a licensed individual.

I support this bill to include cosmetic contact lenses as a class II medical device. They would be included with other devices, such as contact lenses, pregnancy tests, ultrasound scanners, endoscopes, et cetera. This ensures these medical devices are properly regulated, that the quality control is there and that they are distributed by people who are properly licensed. Manufacturers require a Health Canada licence before selling or advertising class II devices. This would mean that cosmetic lenses would require a special licence before they could be sold or dispensed. Non-corrective lenses that are designed to change the shape and colour of one's eyes need to be included in this category. As I said before, it is not only the other things we talked about, but changing the shape of a person's cornea over a period of time of using an ill-fitting lens is very dangerous.

I want to thank the hon. member for bringing forward this bill.

I want to end by quoting the United States Food and Drug Administration which said, "Without a valid prescription, fitting, supervision, or regular check-ups by a qualified eye care professional, decorative contact lenses, like all contact lenses, can cause a variety of serious injuries or conditions" which "can lead rapidly to internal ocular infection if left untreated". They can affect inside the

eye, not only the surface of the eye. It also said that uncontrolled infection can cause permanent corneal scarring. The United States declared in November 2005 that all contact lenses, corrective and non-corrective, should be under the medical device classification, requiring a prescription, an appropriate fitting and appropriate consultation.

By adding non-corrective contact lenses as a medical device under the Food and Drugs Act, we could ensure greater safety in the manufacture and sale of these lenses. Liberals support evidence-based policy and recognize that this is in keeping with good health care.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-313, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (non-corrective cosmetic contact lenses). I congratulate the member for Sarnia—Lambton for introducing this private member's bill. It is not often that we get a chance to introduce private member's bills. This one is very well thought out. The member is a strong representative of her riding. I remember visiting her five or six years ago. She served for some time as warden of Lambton County and also as mayor of Wyoming in Plympton-Wyoming for 16 years. She has to be one of the longest serving mayors in Ontario. Certainly she is the first mayor to serve as the mayor of Plympton-Wyoming.

Many members from the west may be surprised to learn that the very first commercial oil well ever drilled not just in Canada but in North America was drilled in Oil Springs, Lambton County in 1858. The oil industry and energy industry really started in southwestern Ontario, which is still home to many petrochemical and refinery companies. It is a great area of the world that has produced strong baseball teams, strong farm families, and now a strong member of Parliament who has introduced a very good piece of legislation.

All members in the House would agree that eyesight is a gift and it is not something we should ever take for granted. We would also agree that products we put directly on our eyes should be of high quality and safe to use for those purposes. We would also agree that because our eyesight is so very important, consumers should have the information necessary to make an informed decision about whether or not to purchase the product, and once they have, they should also know how to use that product in a safe way.

For all those reasons, this private member's bill is important legislation. It would help us address a long-standing safety issue related to the sale and use of these products. Cosmetic lenses, also known as non-corrective contact lenses, are used to change the appearance of the eye. They are available in a wide range of colours and designs. They are used primarily to make a fashion statement. Today is Halloween and tonight many Canadian children and adults will either go trick or treating or to a Halloween party. Many people will be wearing costumes. These costumes often include cosmetic lenses.

While I have never used them myself, I have seen them and they sometimes can be disconcerting. I have seen red vampire eyes, yellow cat's eyes, even starry eyes. There is a wide range of cosmetic lenses. They often are purchased over the Internet or at a costume retailer, as opposed to corrective lenses which are purchased at drug stores. Unlike corrective contact lenses, there are no labelling requirements to make consumers aware of the potential health and safety risks, or to provide instructions as to their proper use and care.

Cosmetic lenses are identical to corrective lenses, with one exception. Cosmetic and corrective lenses are used in the same way and pose the same risks to human health. The only difference is that cosmetic contact lenses do not correct vision. Even though these two products pose a similar risk, they fall under two different sets of regulations and regulatory regimes. That is the problem this bill would fix.

On the one hand, corrective lenses are considered to be medical devices and are regulated under the Food and Drugs Act and the medical devices regulations. On the other hand, cosmetic contact lenses are considered to be consumer products and are regulated under the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act. The bill before us today would help to harmonize those two sets of regulations by bringing both cosmetic and corrective lenses under the Food and Drugs Act and the medical devices regulations so that there would be greater clarity for consumers and greater health and safety standards for Canadians. That would mean both cosmetic and corrective lenses would be subject to the same rules for health and safety.

• (1145)

In the last Parliament, our government introduced the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act, which is strong legislation. It came into force earlier this year with support from both sides of the House. It strengthens the product and the protection of health and safety of Canadians by requiring suppliers of consumer products to report any safety-related incidents, including serious injuries or deaths, and to report any recalls or any other regulatory action in other jurisdictions.

As a consumer product, cosmetic lenses are regulated under the new legislation. It means that defective cosmetic lenses could be recalled by Health Canada if they posed an unreasonable danger to human health and safety.

However, while the new legislation will give Health Canada the powers of recall and while it is a much improved regulatory framework under which we will regulate consumer products in Canada, it does have one hole in it. The problem is it does not require companies selling these cosmetic lenses to meet the same labelling and consumer instruction standards. That is exactly what Bill C-313 would fix. It would fix this problem by regulating cosmetic lenses as medical devices under the Food and Drugs Act and the Medical Devices Regulations.

It would also require companies to report problems and provide additional information if Health Canada requested it. It would also ensure that all cosmetic lenses met the same regulatory standards as corrective lenses, in other words, the same standards as class II medical devices. Most important, it would ensure that proper information be contained on the packages to allow consumers to make an informed choice as to whether to buy the product and if

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they bought the product, what the proper use of the product would be to ensure eye safety.

Bill C-313 would require that cosmetic lenses meet specific labelling requirements, including instructions for use on the product label. It would provide consumers instructions on how to use the product safely and effectively, which would go a long way in reducing the risks associated with cosmetic contact lenses.

It is important to point out one thing. The legislation would, in no way, mandate prescriptions for cosmetic lenses. Whether to require prescriptions for lenses is a decision of the provinces and the legislation would not change that fact.

However, there are two other important aspects of the legislation that are worth pointing out.

The legislation would simplify the Canadian regulatory framework by bringing both corrective and cosmetic lenses under the same regulatory framework, as opposed to the current situation, which is where one is regulated under one act and the other is regulated under another act. This would ensure that both products would be regulated in a similar fashion.

The second thing it would do is harmonize our regulations with our largest trading partner. Since 2005, all cosmetic lenses sold in the United States have been regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. Currently, many Canadian consumers who purchase these products are confused because many of these cosmetic lenses have labels on them that say "FDA approved". They are confused as to whether they are safe for use in Canada. They are also concerned when they see products that have not been labelled in a similar fashion. The bill would ensure harmonization of cross-border regulations between Canada and our largest trading partner.

I want to once again congratulate the member for bringing forward the legislation. It would allow consumers to continue to have access to high-quality, safe cosmetic lenses. It would simplify our Canadian regulatory framework. It would harmonize the regulations with that of our largest trading partner. Most important, it would require full information be put on the package to allow consumers to make an informed decision about purchasing the product and, once purchased, ensure that consumers would have all the information required in order to use these cosmetic lenses safely.

For all these reasons, I encourage members of the House to support the legislation. I congratulate the member for bringing it forward.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton for introducing this bill. I think it is very important.

Private Members' Business

We must protect Canadians' ocular health. This very simple measure will help reduce the number of eye injuries. Cosmetic contact lenses must be subject to the same regulations as corrective lenses because they present the same health risks. Bill C-313 will help fix a problem that health care professionals have been calling on the government to fix for years.

One of the primary responsibilities of the government should be to protect Canadians from potentially dangerous products. The bill would ensure that corrective contact lenses and cosmetic contact lenses are subject to the same government regulations, since their use presents the same health risks.

Over the past 10 years, health care professionals have warned Canadians about the risks and dangers associated with using unregulated cosmetic lenses. In 2000, Health Canada issued a warning about cosmetic contact lenses and recommended that they be used only under the supervision of an eye care professional. In 2003, Health Canada recommended that the federal government regulate the use of cosmetic contact lenses.

The risks associated with using cosmetic contact lenses without professional oversight have been extensively documented. Problems occur when the contacts are not fitted to the eye—like shoe size, eye size varies greatly from one person to another—when the contacts are of questionable quality, or when they come from a truly unknown supplier.

Problems often occur when consumers are not given the appropriate and necessary information and instructions on how to use the contacts safely, for example, how to put them in, how to take them out and how to clean them.

Cosmetic contact lenses can be quite funky and there are many different types—there are some that look like soccer balls, some that make the iris appear larger, and other sometimes very funny things. Many young people share these contacts but they definitely should not in order to avoid infection.

Cosmetic contact lenses are becoming increasingly popular and, since today is Halloween, they are being sold absolutely everywhere: in convenience stores, beauty salons, and so on.

According to a report published by Health Canada in 2003, the rate of serious injury among people using corrective contact lenses every day is approximately 1% and the overall rate of complication is about 10%. It is estimated that the rate of injury and complication—for example, infection, inflammation or ulceration—is much higher among cosmetic contact lens users.

In 2007, vision loss accounted for the Canadian health care system's highest direct cost, as compared to any other illness. Doctors also say that wearing these contacts prevents people from seeing contrasts properly. Contact lenses reduce the eyes' sensitivity. It is sometimes very difficult to see when wearing cosmetic contacts because there is something in the eye. This results in improper vision. Someone who is wearing them while driving could even cause an accident.

• (1155)

There are many viruses and bacteria that attack the eyes, and we never know which may attack our eyes. This can happen if we share

lenses with a friend who has an infection. So we have to be very cautious when we share contact lenses with other people. The best thing is simply not to do it at all.

Wearing cosmetic contact lenses can lead to a lot of other problems.

These contact lenses are meant to be worn up to a certain date. There is an expiry date, as for milk. Often, people who wear them forget to take them out and throw them in the garbage. That leads to various complications, such as corneal ulcers. Corneal ulcers are genuinely dangerous and can cause scarring of the eyes. That is truly dangerous. If they are not treated, the ulcers can even lead to permanent loss of sight.

Even though cosmetic contact lenses seem harmless, they can cause eye injuries in a person who wears them: an allergic reaction, a bacterial infection, swelling or inflammation of the cornea, and ulceration or scratching of the cornea. These sight problems can become permanent.

Some of these injuries occur in less than 24 hours. They can be very difficult to treat and in some cases can become permanent. The potential risks associated with this type of contact lens are a known fact. As well, there are numerous studies and there is considerable evidence showing the potential dangers associated with misuse of cosmetic contact lenses without supervision by a specialist.

But passing this bill is merely the first step. What the federal government has to do is work with the provinces and territories to establish an effective regulatory scheme for cosmetic contact lenses.

We are talking a lot about Halloween. As mothers, we look for clothing to use for costumes. My little boy, who is 10 years old, has asked for contact lenses for his costume. I therefore think that regulation is very appropriate, and I congratulate my colleague opposite on her bill.

I join my colleagues in the NDP in supporting this bill.

• (1200)

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Sarnia—Lambton, whose constituency is next door to mine, for bringing forward her bill, Bill C-313. I also acknowledge that she and I have spent time working together in terms of being a mayor. I think she holds the title of a warden of a county, elected more times and for a longer period than anyone of whom I know.

Bill C-313 would amend the Food and Drugs Act. Much has been said this morning about the significance of the bill. It is clearly one that wants to see cosmetic contact lenses classified and regulated as medical devices. It appears that the cosmetic contact lenses and, in fact, the corrective lenses go through the same process in their development. It is actually the oversight of the regulatory concerns that go with it.

The member and I both wear glasses. We come with two sets of eyes. These products are mostly used by younger people. We need to ensure that what we do we do for the best health of Canadians. I know all of us in this place come forward today to ensure that we do what we can to protect the health of Canadians.

Today I hear support for the bill. I want to congratulate my colleague for bringing forward this important issue on the health of our eyes.

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.

The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex will have eight minutes remaining when this matter returns to the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1205)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ASBESTOS

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should: (a) ban the use and export of asbestos; (b) support international efforts to add chrysotile asbestos to the list of hazardous chemical products under the Rotterdam Convention; (c) assist affected workers by developing a Just Transition Plan with measures to accommodate their re-entry into the workforce; (d) introduce measures dedicated to affected older workers, through the employment insurance program, to assure them of a decent standard of living until retirement; and (e) support communities and municipalities in asbestos producing regions through an investment fund for regional economic diversification.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to introduce this New Democratic Party motion calling for a ban on the use and export of all forms of asbestos and a just transition plan for asbestos-producing workers and communities.

I am especially honoured to share my time with my colleague from Winnipeg Centre. Like me, he was exposed early to asbestos and he became a tenacious labour leader for health and safety rights for workers. Since his election 14 years ago, in 1997, he has championed in this House the ban on asbestos.

Today we are closer to that than ever before. I am grateful for my colleague, for my New Democratic Party and for a broad coalition of national and international health care, trade union and human rights advocates that have fought this fight.

Let us not mince words: asbestos is extremely harmful. Asbestos kills. This is a substance so noxious that it has been banned from manufacturing processes in Canada, yet we export it to countries such as India, where our government has accepted the absurd claim that it is safe to use. For a government that purports to be friendly to immigrants, this is real hypocrisy.

The medical community has been clear and unanimous in refuting the industry argument that although asbestos is dangerous, chrysotile is just fine. There may be different forms of asbestos; they may have

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varying chemical makeups and different lengths of shapes and fibres, but they all produce disease, some worse than others.

As Canadians and as a country with international responsibilities, we know that the right thing to do is to ban the extraction and exporting of asbestos.

[Translation]

The scientific debate on chrysotile asbestos is over. The overwhelming consensus in the scientific community is clear: chrysotile asbestos does cause serious harm to human health, there is no safe way to use it, and it should be banned. Credible sources estimate that over 100,000 people die every year around the world as a result of asbestos-related diseases.

[English]

Yet we also know the mineral is caught up in the story of hard-working people in the towns of Asbestos and Thetford Mines. They are hard-working miners making a livelihood for themselves and their loved ones. From my 34 years of working in a mine, I know the story too well.

It is also the right thing to ensure that older asbestos workers have a decent standard of living through retirement. We need to broaden the disability compensation to include all victims of asbestos-related diseases in Canada and we must create an investment fund to support the diversification of the economy in asbestos-producing regions. We will speak about these and other policies to help those workers throughout this debate.

I read recently one of the community leaders in Quebec thought there would be shame for his workers and his community to have asbestos added to the list of chemicals banned for import by the Rotterdam Convention. While I understand his comments, in truth there is no shame for those workers. They have gone into the mine shafts shift after shift, day after day, and with the sweat of their brow have put food on the table for their families. They believed what they were told by their bosses and by those making money from asbestos, who, like the tobacco companies from another time, spun misinformation and doubt.

The real shame today is for the Conservative government and the Prime Minister, who unconscionably stand with only three other countries in the world in refusing to act. On three occasions since 2008, the Conservative government has blocked international efforts to list asbestos on the UN's list of hazardous substances. Asbestos is banned in more than 50 countries, including most developed nations, but Canada continues to be one of the leading producers and exporters of asbestos. Canada exports nearly 200,000 tonnes per year into poor and developing nations. That is more than any other country in the world.

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Listing asbestos in the convention would force exporters such as Canada to warn recipient countries of any health hazards. Those countries could also then refuse asbestos imports if they thought they could not handle the product safely. Rotterdam listings are determined by consensus, and if there are countries that oppose, like Canada, then a substance like asbestos cannot be listed.

The workers in developing nations lack basic health protection. They are often unaware about safety measures. They do not receive training to instruct them on how to handle asbestos at the least risk to their lives.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Internal Health Canada documents reveal that, as far back as 2006, department officials refuted the Conservatives' claim that chrysotile asbestos is safe. The director general of Health Canada's safe environments program even said, "We cannot say that chrysotile is safe. Health Canada's preferred position would be to include it on the list, as this would be consistent with controlled use."

Under the auspices of this Prime Minister, Canada has sponsored and paid for 160 trade missions in 60 countries to promote asbestos. Over the past three years, this government has also granted \$150,000 to the Chrysotile Institute, a lobby group in the asbestos sector that promotes the product abroad.

[*English*]

"Adding asbestos to the list is the wise thing to do". Those are not only words; they are the words of former Conservative cabinet minister Chuck Strahl. We are all familiar with his story, his courageous battle against cancer and how this subject touches him.

As an industrialized country, we must put the global good before domestic political consideration. We came to know in this country how dangerous asbestos was. We banned it, right here in Parliament. We closed entire buildings and we are spending millions of dollars because we know how dangerous asbestos is. What is unsafe here cannot be safe once it arrives in another country.

I implore the government, the Prime Minister, and the hon. member from the region to do the right thing. If their opposition is the loss of jobs, then let us work together on a transition plan to invest in those communities and regions. In doing so, we can save lives here and around the globe.

In closing, I want to cite the commentary of a broad coalition of eminent doctors in Quebec who have written to the Prime Minister with their compelling questions.

[*Translation*]

They wrote:

Given that you, Mr. Prime Minister, and the current Canadian government believe in the safe use of chrysotile asbestos, and considering its recognized harmfulness, what is the problem with subjecting it to the prior informed consent procedure under the Rotterdam Convention? Why would Canada be opposed to allowing countries that import chrysotile to have all pertinent information when making their decision? Why is Canada afraid of not supporting the decision to include chrysotile on the list? We see no reason to oppose this and every reason to support it.

As doctors and Canadian citizens, we want to be proud of the role our country plays on the international scene.

[*English*]

I would like to read from an email I received yesterday. It is from Tracy:

My dad died of mesothelioma in 2008. After learning that asbestos-related diseases are the number one occupational killer in Canada and that there was no fund to support organizations working on asbestos-related initiatives, my mom and I established the Asbestos-related Research, Education and Advocacy fund. We have been truly shocked by this government's actions and position on this issue. The Harper government's excuses are embarrassing and unforgivable...

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I remind the hon. member that he cannot refer to members of the chamber by their given names, even in a quote.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for that.

In the name of justice and protection of workers here and around the world, in the name of our obligations to others on our planet, I urge MPs in all parties to support this motion.

• (1215)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in support of the motion put forward by the hon. member for Nickel Belt.

I am proud of the fact that the Green Party was the first federal political party to call for an end to the asbestos industry in Canada and a just transition for its workers.

We now face world disapproval for our quite immoral position that somehow chrysotile asbestos can be used safely in other countries while we recognize that it kills people here. I would like to ask the hon. member for Nickel Belt what information he has regarding the World Health Organization's position on the Canadian support of asbestos.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, even though the Green Party has supported this position for a long time, I would like to again thank and refer to my colleague from Winnipeg, because had he not done due diligence on this file, we might not be discussing this today.

However, it is quite clear that the international community supports the ban of asbestos throughout the world. It is a substance that is dangerous. It is a substance that kills. It is a substance that we should not import or export to third world countries that are not protected against the use of asbestos.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments that my colleague has made.

I have a constituent, Julius Hava, who is struggling right now to stay alive because of this illness.

The problem here is that not only do a lot of people in Canada and across the world suffer from this illness, but the fact of the matter is that in Canada it is very difficult to get treatment for it.

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Julius's wife, Martina, says this should never have happened: "Do not take me wrong. We still believe that miracles might happen and God could cure Julius". She goes on to say that she thought this was the best country in the world, and now she is ashamed to be Canadian.

Does the hon. member think that Canadians who are struck by this disease should have access to medical assistance immediately? If there is a problem between WSIB and the provincial government, should it be dealt with in a way similar to what Jordan's principle was meant to do?

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, if people affected by asbestos in Canada are having problems getting medical attention in a country like Canada, think about the people in India, where we export this product.

The government of the day tries to lay claim that it is the protector of immigrants in Canada, but with the exportation of asbestos, we are killing some of their brothers and sisters in their home country. We are killing some of their parents. We are killing their cousins, but we still do not want to ban it for some ideological reason. The government should be ashamed of not wanting to ban this substance.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Nickel Belt for proposing the motion in the House.

Given the substantial amount of information that is out there about the dangers of not only mining asbestos but also using it, and given the fact that it is not only the miners who suffer with related cancers but also often their families because the miners come home with their clothing full of asbestos, I would like to ask the member to comment as to whether he can see any logical reason whatsoever why Canada would not support the Rotterdam Convention?

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite right. Not only are miners affected by this but so can their children or wives when miners come home with their clothes full of asbestos. There is absolutely no reason for not banning the substance.

I wish to quote from an email I received, "My husband died of mesothelioma and I belong to Canada's Voice of Asbestos Victims. Canada's export of asbestos to developing countries has to stop. Here are all the Canadian organizations who agree with your motion".

It goes on to list the many organizations. I do not have enough time to list them all, but there is a full page of organizations that support the ban of asbestos.

• (1220)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to join in this debate, which has been a long time coming and is long overdue.

Asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known. More Canadians die from asbestos than from all other industrial and occupational-related causes combined, and yet Canada continues to be one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world. On a good year we dump nearly 200,000 tonnes into underdeveloped and developing nations.

Not only is asbestos not banned in Canada, as it is in as many as 50 developed nations, but we have spent millions of dollars and

continue to spend millions of dollars subsidizing and promoting the asbestos industry. No other Canadian commodity enjoys the amount of support that asbestos does. This class A carcinogen enjoys an irrational affinity of the Government of Canada, which made 160 trade junkets to 60 different countries using our embassies, trade commissioners, and our foreign missions to promote something that we Canadians ourselves would not allow our children to be exposed to.

It is the height of hypocrisy that we are spending tens of millions of dollars to remove all of the asbestos from the Parliament Buildings because no MP should ever be exposed to a single fibre, and yet we promote and subsidize the export of thousands of tonnes per year to underdeveloped nations where there are virtually no health and safety protocols.

We are exporting human misery on a monumental scale and there is no justification or excuse for it. We are exporting a made in Canada epidemic. It is like unleashing a thousand Bhopal's into India in a timed release way because we know that the legacy of disease and death stemming from this is undeniable.

Who agrees with us? The World Health Organization, the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Cancer Society have all recently said that asbestos should be banned in all its forms and that Canada should be out of the asbestos industry.

We do not even have to take active steps to shut down the asbestos industry. All we have to do is turn off the tap of corporate welfare, the millions of dollars in direct and indirect subsidies to the industry. I call it corporate welfare for corporate serial killers. It is indefensible. Canadians would be horrified to know the extent of our involvement in the asbestos cartel.

I agree with Keith Spicer, a veteran Canadian journalist, who said recently that Canada's position on asbestos is morally and ethically reprehensible. He wrote this in Paris, where notably, France was one of the first countries in the European Union to ban asbestos in all of its forms. Canada went to the World Trade Organization in 1999 to try to stop France from banning its asbestos. Fortunately, for the people of France, Canada lost and that led to the entire European Union banning asbestos in all of its forms.

No amount of money is going to take the stink off the asbestos industry. Imagine a lobby organization being funded by the government to lobby the government. That is how irrational our approach to asbestos is. We not only spend money subsidizing the industry directly but we subsidize it in an indirect way as well. We sent a team of Department of Justice lawyers all over the world like globe-trotting propagandists to try to block other countries from curbing its use. It is incredible.

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I went to Rome at my own expense and observed the Canadian delegation sabotage the Rotterdam convention in an effort to keep asbestos off the list of hazardous materials. The Rotterdam convention does not even ban hazardous chemicals. It just says that if they are going to be sold then they must include a warning label and a caution to the end user. In other words, informed prior consent that the end user knows that it is a carcinogen.

Canada has consistently blocked asbestos being listed on the Rotterdam convention because it would interfere with our ability to market it in the third world. When commercialization trumps science and reason, logic, morality and ethics, then we are in a serious situation.

• (1225)

There are those who would have us believe that there is something magically benign about the asbestos that we mine here in Canada. Ninety-five per cent of all the asbestos ever mined in the world is chrysotile, the type that we mine here. I used to work in the asbestos mines. We were lied to about the health hazards of asbestos then, just as the world continues to be lied to about the health hazards of chrysotile today. All asbestos kills. Chrysotile asbestos is a class A carcinogen, according to Health Canada, the World Health Organization, the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Cancer Society.

Time does not permit me to go through the history of Canada's irrational affinity for this carcinogen. The asbestos industry has been like the tobacco industry's evil twin, in that they both have relied for more than a century on junk science, the best science money can buy; on aggressive public relations campaigns, domestically and internationally; and on intense political lobbying.

That is how the asbestos industry has pulled the wool over the eyes of the world for a generation. Canada plays an integral role in the activities of the asbestos cartel because it relies on Canada's boy scout image. The asbestos industry tells the world that if a nice country like Canada thinks asbestos is okay, it must be okay. That boy scout image is being severely tarnished. Canada is being viewed as an international pariah for our involvement in the asbestos industry.

Let me suggest that the money we spend subsidizing the asbestos industry would be better spent on starting a national registry to track and monitor the incidence of asbestos-related disease across the country. It would be better spent to improve the diagnostics and treatment of asbestos-related disease because if we are going to be one of the largest exporters of exporters to the world, surely we should be a centre of excellence for the diagnostics and treatment of asbestos-related disease.

In actual fact, Canadians who are struck down with mesothelioma more often than not have to go to the United States to get decent diagnostics and treatment. The money that we spend subsidizing the asbestos industry now would be better used putting in place a testing and remediation program so that Canadian homeowners, whose biggest single investment is contaminated by this Canadian epidemic, would be given a chance to test for asbestos and remove it when found. That would be a good use of government tax dollars.

The Government of Canada participated in contaminating hundreds of thousands of Canadian homes through its CHIP, a home insulation program in the late 1970s and early 1980s. One of the products the government was subsidizing was called zonalite, which is loaded with tremolite asbestos. It contaminated the attics of hundreds of thousands of homes, subsidized and promoted its installation and then left homeowners with this liability, not only making their homes unsafe but devaluing them as well. That would be a good use of Canadian tax dollars in relation to this particular carcinogen.

In my final minute, I would like to make members aware of an open letter that was sent to the member for Simcoe—Grey, a medical doctor who recently received national recognition for her work in the protection of children. This letter is signed by hundreds of doctors around the country, urging the member for Simcoe—Grey, as a Conservative member of Parliament, to live up to her Hippocratic oath and not support the Conservative government's irrational and dangerous position on asbestos. In fact, the letter makes an urgent appeal to the member to stand with science and research, and not with the political and commercial considerations that have kept this deadly industry killing people for much longer than it ever should.

Let the asbestos industry die a natural death. Turn off the tap of corporate welfare and, believe me, it will go the way of all the other asbestos mines in the country and Canada will be out of this deadly industry.

• (1230)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise to commend the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre for his years of dedicated service in raising this issue. He has been a champion on this file. I have only one question for him.

Can we, with compassion and respect toward members on the opposite side of the House, find ways to get them to at long last join all the other parties in this House who now see the danger of asbestos? How do we break through the barrier that continues to allow Canada to argue an unscientific and indefensible position in the world community?

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I, too, recognize the long-standing support by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for this global movement to ban asbestos. Often, she and I were the only ones at events, functions and rallies to bring the public's attention to this issue.

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She raises an important point. There is zero scientific evidence to support the government side. There is one study, which has never been peer tested, by a man named David Bernstein that the Chrysotile Institute paid \$1 million to have written. It is so absurd that not a medical doctor in the world has ever ratified or peer tested it. One of the points Dr. Bernstein makes on behalf of the Conservative government is that ingesting chrysotile asbestos is actually good for people in the sense that it triggers their bodies' immune system to try to expel it. He went on to explain that it was like flexing a muscle. The body's immune system is mobilized to get rid of asbestos. It is so absurd it is almost comical.

The rest of the scientific community is united in saying that all asbestos kills, that there is nothing benign about Canadian chrysotile asbestos and that Canada should get out of the asbestos industry.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to read a quote for the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre and I would like him to comment on it. This quote was by Stephen Lewis at Concordia University on October 5. He stated, "It is beyond belief that we are exporting death. And we are exporting it wilfully and knowledgeable. I don't understand it. I don't understand the government and this province, Quebec, and I don't understand the Government of Canada. There is no asbestos anywhere that is safe, none, and it is unimaginable that we are willing to sacrifice lives in developing countries to support a relatively handful of jobs in the Canadian economy".

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I do not think that poignant remark needs any additional comment. It is a widely-held view. First, most Canadians think that asbestos is banned in Canada. It is not. Canada even sabotaged the United States. When the United States tried to ban asbestos in 1992, Canada unleashed Allan Gottlieb and Derek Burney. Every senior diplomat in the country swept down and managed to block congress' bill to ban asbestos in all its forms. Had it done so 20 years ago, I believe a domino effect would have taken place and the world would have stopped the trade and traffic of Canadian asbestos.

Instead, we are the world's number one cheerleader and sabotage other countries' efforts to curb its use at every opportunity. We go to the WTO and file grievances whenever some country wants to ban asbestos. We twist the arms of small developing nations. We give them foreign aid with one hand on the condition that they keep supporting the asbestos industry. On the other hand, it is morally and ethically reprehensible, in the words of Keith Spicer.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I bought a house about four years ago that had vermiculite in the attic. It was tested and found to contain tremolite asbestos. I had to pay thousands of dollars to have it properly removed.

I was wondering if the member might tell us when Canada banned that particular form of insulation containing asbestos as a precedent for dealing with it.

• (1235)

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, all forms of asbestos are heavily regulated in Canada. Zonolite insulation is no longer sold, not because it is banned but because of the liability associated with it. The manufacturer is bankrupt now because of class action suits against him. However, we are stuck with hundreds of thousands of homes contaminated by Zonolite insulation that was subsidized and

promoted by the federal government under its CHIP, home insulation program.

When UFFI foam was put in the same program, the government immediately put in place a UFFI foam removal program and stripped all foam insulation. While UFFI foam was irritating to some people with allergies, Zonolite asbestos insulation is deadly. It is loaded with tremolite, which is the most virulent form of asbestos. If the government is going to subsidize anything in the asbestos industry, it should be a testing and remediation program to help homeowners make their homes safe and stop the devaluation that takes place when their attics are full of Zonolite.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be splitting my time with the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

I will take a few minutes to talk about the great things that are happening in our natural resources sector and our resource-based communities across the country. As most hon. members would know, Canada navigated the global economic downturn far better than most other countries. The global recession hit Canada later, affected us less severely and we emerged stronger than other G7 nations.

Our economy has delivered and developed more than 465,000 new jobs since 2009. International bodies, such as the International Monetary Fund, are predicting Canada will continue to be a leader in economic growth.

While the economic picture is now brighter, it is important to remember that our economic future remains fragile, and that is why our government will continue to focus on creating jobs, creating growth and expanding opportunities for Canadians from coast to coast.

Unlike the opposition, our government recognizes that Canada's traditional industries still remain very crucial to our economy. We have always stood firmly behind Canada's forestry, mineral and energy sectors and we will continue to support them as they innovate and grow.

On the other hand, we hear the NDP members standing in the House again and again in opposition to our resource sectors. From a western Canadian perspective, if we are talking about the oil sands, we hear members opposite standing and opposing every measure that would actually grow this important sector. They join with foreign interests, for example, they oppose Keystone XL, the northern gateway and the twinning of the Trans Mountain pipeline. It seems they are opposed to all economic development dealing with the resource sector.

Furthermore, they oppose all of these important projects typically before the independent regulators even review the projects for the environmental impact.

On forestry, the NDP has also found it difficult to actually support workers and the rural economy. The member for Winnipeg Centre at committee a year ago said:

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If we were talking big picture, about a sustainable future, we wouldn't be talking about a better way to cut down more trees and build with material that begins to rot the moment you use it. We would be talking about a way to build things without....

That is a pretty clear example of how the NDP fails to support our resource-based economies. It does not realize that our natural resource sectors are doing a great job to fuel Canada's economy. They are doing a great job in creating Canadian jobs. They are actually leading the economic recovery that is now under way.

In 2010, the energy, mining and forestry sectors accounted for \$140 billion in real GDP. They are supporting hundred of thousands of jobs in rural communities right across the country. Today, our country's mining sector is proving to be a powerful engine for our economic success.

We all know that Canada is one of the largest mining nations in the world. We produce more than 60 minerals and metals. Canadian mining companies are located in more than 100 countries around the globe, involved in more than 10,000 projects and with assets outside of Canada worth over \$110 billion in 2009.

In 2010, Canada's mining and mineral processing industry generated over \$35 billion in GDP, over \$12 billion in capital investment and \$18 billion in trade surplus.

Our mining industry is also a powerful engine for job creation. Last year, more than 308,000 Canadians were directly employed in mining, exploration and mineral processing with many more in related industries. Many of these jobs are found in rural and remote communities across Canada. We know that for every dollar we spend on public geoscience, the industry invests, on average, \$5 in new exploration. So there is a strong return for the money that is spent on science. At the same time as, this industry is facing real challenges, declining base metal reserves, increased competition from abroad and concerns about its social and—

• (1240)

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Maybe the hon. member and my colleague on the natural resources committee did not understand the motion. It is about asbestos. He has talked about the economy, oil sands, forestry and science, but not about asbestos. We are here today to talk about asbestos that kills Canadians, not only in Canada but globally. We would like the member to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): As the member for Nickel Belt knows, the Chair is in the habit of allowing members the opportunity to work their way back to the subject at hand and I trust that the hon. parliamentary secretary will get to the matter before the House.

Mr. David Anderson: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about our mining industry and, today, I want to help my colleague understand the broader picture in which we find ourselves in Canada. It is important for him to listen and learn from this.

We have done some things that are encouraging our mining industry. We have extended the mineral exploration tax credit for another year. We are supporting the targeted geoscience initiative and the green mining initiative, which are all designed to foster the industry's environmental footprint. The member opposite wants to talk about the environmental footprint and we are certainly doing that.

We are also striving to improve our regulatory system for major projects and for the mining projects that are taking place in this country. For too long, our resource projects have been stuck in an inefficient regulatory system. Our objective has been clear, we want to move toward a one project, one review process that will continue to protect the environment, as the NDP claims that it is concerned about, while speeding up the process and providing clearer areas of responsibility for every project that has to be considered.

All these initiatives are done with the same goals in mind, and that is boosting Canada's economy and creating jobs in rural and remote communities. As the member opposite would know, many remote communities are benefiting from the boom in mining activity right across this country.

At committee, we have been exploring this very thing. We have been taking a look, in particular, at the geo-mapping for energy and minerals initiative that is taking place in this country. It is helping to unlock opportunities across the country, particularly in the north, that will bring real economic benefits and long-term jobs for local residents.

I guess I should maybe mention an example or two. The Meadowbank gold mine in Nunavut is a good example of how our government's geoscience is supporting mineral exploration and development in the north. It is one of a new generation of northern mines that are bringing direct benefits to Inuit communities while ensuring that we protect the environment.

I should point out that more than 39% of the mine's workforce is Inuit. Mine construction operations have also contributed more than \$1.26 billion to the community and northern-based suppliers over the last three years. Last year, the mine dispensed about \$10 million in royalties.

I think I need to cover another pillar of Canada's natural resources economy, and I will just touch quickly on forestry before I get back to the specific issue that the member opposite wanted us to address.

I want to assure members that we are standing behind workers who depend on the forest industry in hundreds of Canadian communities. Even at the best of times, these hard-working men and women face many challenges. Now, during the ongoing global difficulties, their challenges are that much greater. The economic downturn has certainly caused uncertainty and volatility in our economy, and forestry is no exception.

Our government is making strategy investments to ensure a solid future for workers in Canada's forest sector and the communities that depend on it. We recently delivered another instalment on our commitment to the forest industry. Our government is investing almost \$90 million in 13 projects to build a more sustainable and competitive forest sector in Canada. These projects range from improving energy efficiency at the Meadow Lake Mechanical Pulp mill in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, to helping a Boyle, Alberta mill diversify its products to include methanol.

Business of Supply

Funding is delivered through federal programs that are supporting the renewal and transition of our—

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, my English comprehension is starting to improve. I do not think forestry has anything to do with asbestos. Can we hear at the wording of today's opposition motion? Are we talking about asbestos or forestry? I will have to adjust my speech accordingly. There is something that does not add up today.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): As I said to the hon. member for Nickel Belt a few moments ago, the Chair gives speakers the opportunity to work their way toward the matter before the House today. I trust that the parliamentary secretary will do that. There is one minute remaining in his speech.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I know I would be up here much longer if the members opposite had not been interrupting and shortening my speech.

I am glad to talk about natural resources and the importance—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to understand. I asked you a question. Are we talking about asbestos or forestry today? Is this NDP opposition day on the impact of chrysotile asbestos or something else? We will have to adjust our speeches. I just want to know whether we are talking about forestry or asbestos today.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The Chair would be pleased to provide a copy of the motion for the hon. member for Bourassa so that he could verify the contents of today's debate.

The hon. member for Crowfoot.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the speech because it lays out for the opposition the fact that asbestos is a mining operation, not grown on trees, as the member for Bourassa seems to believe.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I heard you say that you should provide the hon. member for Bourassa with a copy of the motion today. Could I suggest that you supply a copy to the present speaker so he could talk about it?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the hon. parliamentary secretary for avoiding the topic of asbestos altogether. Giving a speech that does not mention it is the only morally defensible position.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I would ask all hon. members to allow the parliamentary secretary to complete his remarks.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, you generously stated that you would allow speakers to work their way toward the issue in question. There is one minute remaining in the hon. member's speech. I believe he would now be addressing asbestos in the last minute if he—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I appreciate all the assistance the hon. members have offered the Chair in this regard. I

would like to go back to the hon. parliamentary secretary so he can complete his remarks.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I guess I am disappointed that the member for Bourassa was not a bit more informed before he came to the House. He maybe should have read the motion ahead of time. He would know that it deals with natural resources and trying to develop a greener, more diversified and sustainable industry across the country, which is what we are trying to do.

I would like to talk about the fact that rural communities across the country that depend on natural resources can depend on the support of this government. They know we have a pro-grow strategy that is opposed by the opposition. However, we will create jobs right across the country, whether it is in Quebec, Atlantic Canada, Ontario, the Prairies or British Columbia. The NDP's agenda would do exactly the opposite, which is to destroy those resource extraction jobs that Canadians count on and upon which so many communities are dependent.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member that has nothing to do with geo-mapping, or forestry or the oil sands. I am going to partially quote from a long email that I received from Brian White from Sarnia. He states:

Please know that from a community where over 11,000 people have been killed or made gravely ill due to asbestos exposure, we are standing in solidarity to have this exportation stopped. We know the effects of this deadly product and do not wish to make a dime off of anyone else who will suffer as we have in this community. From the bottom of my heart, please stop this unethical industry.

Would the hon. member comment about asbestos and not forestry, or geo-mapping or whatever else he has on his mind? The motion is about asbestos.

• (1250)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, we sympathize with workers across the country who may find themselves in a dangerous situation. I come from a farming background. We know that farming is one of the most dangerous occupations in the country as is mining. Therefore, we stand with miners across the country when they find themselves in a situation where their jobs are a danger.

However, Canada has one of the strongest regulatory environments around the world when it comes to our natural resource sectors. We are prepared to work again to create jobs through that development of our economy. We certainly stand strong, in terms of the regulatory structures. If we take a look at things like the nuclear industry, for example, the CNSC is a very strong regulator. In terms of the pipelines and so forth, the NEB stands strong as a regulator. Our offshore boards protect Canadians workers. There are many regulations across the country. We often hear that environmental assessments need to be done to protect workers and the environment, and we are in favour of that.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the parliamentary secretary tell us if the government has independent scientific reports on the health impacts of asbestos and if it does, is he willing to table those? Perhaps if he will not table them, he might put them in a video on his website.

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Would he also tell us whether there is any reason why the House should believe that when materials containing chrysotile asbestos are cut, or scraped, or filed, or sanded or removed, people always take precautions to avoid getting cancer, for example, to avoid those health impacts?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry has been clear on this. He has answered this question many times in the House and has explained it to the members opposite.

I am intrigued. Now that the Liberals are not in government, they appear to be changing their position on this issue. For a long time they had a different position than they do now. I would ask my colleagues across the way this. When did they decide to change their position? I do not think it was done through any sense of ethics or morality. They probably thought there was some political gain for them, and I am not sure that is actually the case.

However, the Minister of Industry has been clear on this. He has explained to the House many times that there are in fact places where chrysotile can be used safely. The government would certainly not support anything that would not be safe for workers.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is good to hear my hon. colleague across the way talk about ethics and morality.

We have quotes from the Prime Minister, who is a vigorous proponent of the asbestos industry. On April 7, he said, "Only the Conservative party will defend this industry here and everywhere in Canada". Yet the building right next to this place is closed to members of Parliament as workers carefully extract this deadly substance.

Could the hon. member speak to the issue of morality and ethics as it pertains to this issue and the hypocrisy that the government seems to have displayed?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I can talk to the issue of the NDP members consistently standing against the good initiatives that we take for the Canadian people. It seems every time we come forward they sit over there, complain and ask for various things. When we come forward with proposals that would actually address those issues, they completely oppose them.

The NDP members need to take a look at themselves as well and decide if they will begin to work with us to govern for Canadians or if they are content to stay with their old ideological bent and continue to oppose virtually everything that is good for Canadians.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to talk about the importance of mining in Canada.

Canada is one of the largest mining nations in the world, with projects across the country. It would not be an exaggeration to add that Canada is probably the world's greatest mining nation, outstripping all our international competitors in depth, extent and expertise of our minerals and metals sector, both domestically and around the world.

Canadian companies are now working in more than 100 countries, in more than 10,000 projects, with mining assets outside of Canada worth more than \$109 billion in capitalization. We produce more

than 60 minerals and metals, with a magnitude of the assets within Canada similar to our assets abroad, with foreign direct investment into Canada accounting for about \$80 billion.

The significance and enormity of these undertakings cannot be overstated. Since the early days of our country, mining has been a cornerstone to Canada's economy. It was and is the lifeblood of rural towns and villages in all provinces and territories, from Thetford Mines and Baie Comeau in Quebec to Kitimat in British Columbia.

On the human scale, more than 308,000 Canadians are employed in mining, exploration and mineral processing, with tens of thousands more men and women working in related industries such as banking, equipment supplies and legal services. It is important to point out that mining is the number one employer of aboriginal people in Canada.

Last year, the mining and mineral processing industries made huge contributions to the Canadian economy. For example, \$2.6 billion was spent in mineral exploration and deposit appraisal, a significant economic stimulus to rural and remote regions of Canada. These industries contributed \$35.1 billion to our gross domestic product and over \$12 billion in capital investment.

Canada has always been a trading nation and one of the main reasons is our abundance of natural resources. We are indeed blessed to have so many commodities in hot demand around the world.

At the international level, the evidence of Canada's importance as a major miner is clear when we take a look at our exports. The total value of Canadian mineral exports was \$84.5 billion, accounting for 21% of Canada's total exports last year. Put another way, the net impact of these exports contributed \$18 billion to our trade surplus.

Here is another impressive financial fact. Half of the world's equity financing for mineral exploration and mineral development was raised in Canadian stock exchanges. Mining companies with headquarters in Canada accounted for more than 39% of worldwide exploration expenditures last year.

We are a leading supplier of important minerals and metals, such as uranium, nickel—

● (1255)

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We are here to talk about asbestos. We are here to talk about how it kills people. We are now 16 minutes into the Conservative member's 20-minute speech and we have not heard the word "asbestos" yet. Would you kindly print the motion and hand it out to all the Conservative members so they will realize that we are here to talk about asbestos that kills Canadians?

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The Chair has dealt with the question of relevance on several occasions this morning. As I have stated repeatedly, hon. members are given significant latitude in terms of addressing a topic to make a presentation they feel is relevant. This is something that all hon. members enjoy in this place.

Is the hon. member for Nickel Belt, rising on the same point of order? The member will need to have something specific or I will not allow this point of order.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, you say you are giving members time to get to a relevant subject. I think 16 minutes is enough time for the speakers to speak to the motion. Sixteen minutes out of 20 is enough time. They should start making the subject relevant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The Chair has ruled that members will be given latitude to address the motion before the House today. The Chair suggests that if members would like to rise on a point of order, they need something more specific or different than what has already been raised.

The hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, the country's economy is a priority for the government. Canada has emerged from the global recession in good shape, but we are still affected by the uncertainties of the world economy. Our recovery remains fragile. Canadians continue to worry about their jobs and the economic future. Let me put into context what these global realities mean for the mining sector and what they mean for the many thousands of Canadian families who depend on mining for their livelihood and income.

The evidence indicates that we ought to see the glass as half full, not half empty. To date, the average prices of most minerals and metals are higher than in 2010. For example, gold increased 23% in 2011, outperforming all other assets including equities, bonds, cash and housing. Looking ahead, the prices of most minerals and metals are expected to remain well above historical levels, in part due to strong demand in China and other emerging economies.

Our government has every intention of continuing to work closely with Canada's mining sector to enhance its competitiveness and environmental responsibility, and to support mining communities. Natural Resources Canada helps these vital business players in the domestic economy with ongoing research and development. The government is also extremely active internationally in its relationship with other countries in an effort to search for new and expanded global markets.

With regard to the subject of today's debate, for over 30 years the Government of Canada has promoted the safe and controlled use of chrysotile. The Government of Canada will not ban a naturally occurring substance. That would put a chill on the entire natural resource industry which is so key to our economic future.

Chrysotile extraction, as with all resource development, is the responsibility of the provinces. This motion is an intrusion on provincial jurisdiction to ban the use of a substance that is traded around the world legally.

Instead, the Government of Canada created the Chrysotile Institute to promote its safe use. Over the years, the Chrysotile

Institute has assisted in the transfer of knowledge and technology to more than 60 foreign countries.

Like other minerals and metals, chrysotile is a naturally occurring substance and supports a viable mining industry in Quebec. Everyone involved in this industry recognizes that the substance can be hazardous, which is why it is strictly managed under controlled conditions through the enforcement of appropriate safety regulations. That safety message has been strongly communicated around the world.

Like other metals and minerals used in industrial applications, chrysotile-based products are used in much needed consumer products.

The exploration and mineral investment climate in Canada is on a positive trend and attracts significant foreign and Canadian investment. As a result of the increasing global demand for minerals and metals driven by emerging economies such as China and India, this trend is expected to continue.

Creating and maintaining an attractive investment environment is essential if we are to continue to take advantage of growing global demand. Having the lowest corporate tax rate in the G7 makes Canada an extremely attractive place to do business.

Our government has worked long and hard on measures to make this positive climate a reality. It is no accident that Canada's mining sector has flourished in this climate. It is also no accident that earlier this month *Forbes* magazine said that Canada is the best place in the world to do business. That is good news for the economy and good news for all Canadians.

• (1300)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that this was a provincial matter. I want to clarify that mining is a provincial responsibility, but the exportation of asbestos is a federal issue.

Will the hon. member stand and say that he will support banning the exportation of asbestos?

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, asbestos is not the only dangerous substance that is produced in this country, or any other country, for that matter. There are many other substances, minerals and metals that are dangerous to people. Banning the export of these naturally occurring products would hurt no one else but the mining industry and the companies that invest their money in mining.

We have to remember that if we have a substance, whether naturally occurring or man-made, that is dangerous to people, we have to make sure that the people who are exposed to it handle it properly and are protected, and that all measures are taken to ensure there is no effect on their health.

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• (1305)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I will ask my hon. colleague from Mississauga East—Cooksville a direct question. How can we reconcile the claim that we are very careful and warn people of the health risks of chrysotile asbestos when Canada alone in the world has blocked the listing of asbestos as a hazardous substance under the Rotterdam Convention? Surely, if we want to export it safely, we would welcome the chance to give the countries that are importing this hazardous product the right of prior informed consent under that convention.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, through the Chrysotile Institute, Canada has been working with countries that produce and use chrysotile effectively to implement and enforce regulations to keep exposure low and utilize control of use practices of chrysotile.

As I mentioned before, chrysotile is not the only dangerous substance. I would remind members that we sell uranium. The safety precautions in handling, transporting and mining the substance are crucial and most important.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Mississauga East—Cooksville clearly knows what he is talking about because he has a professional background as a mining engineer. He has shared stories with me from time to time about his time in Poland when he was working directly in the mines.

Maybe the member could share with us the advancements that have been made in mining to protect workers and consumers from dangerous products that are used to make everyday goods. Could the member share some of his experiences and tell us how mining has improved in Canada?

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, mining is a dangerous industry. Miners work in very difficult environments. They are exposed to different substances. Technology has taken a big step forward and miners are protected much better than before. I would also like to mention that some materials that are dangerous to people are not used as commonly as they were before.

When I was young, I used to play with little lead figures. Lead is dangerous. The use of lead has decreased over the years to an insignificant level. It has been replaced by other materials. That is the case with other dangerous materials.

Through the advancement of technology and through research and development, we may not use chrysotile down the road. That is the solution we are looking for, but for the time being, it is important for us to protect to the best of our ability the people who do have contact with this substance.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Vancouver Centre.

I welcome the opportunity to take part in this debate on the NDP opposition day motion on chrysotile asbestos. We heard from two Conservative members who really had no coherent argument to offer on this subject that I heard, and had some difficulty in following the notes they were ordered to use by the Prime Minister's Office.

On the other hand, the NDP has long opposed asbestos exports. Some members, for instance the member for Winnipeg Centre and the member for Outremont, at times have employed extreme rhetoric. Those members might admit that they are known for that.

However, I believe the focus of today's motion is more reasoned, balanced and logical.

The motion calls for a ban on the use and export of asbestos. This position is supported by the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment and other physicians, scientists and organizations too numerous to list. Why all this opposition, then? Why are all these medical people so strongly and unanimously opposed to the export of asbestos?

With respect to asbestos, the science is clear that it is a danger to human health. The Conservative government will tell us that if used properly, it is safe. However, most of the government's own members know that is not true.

The Canadian Cancer Society says that worldwide more than 100,000 people die every year from occupational exposure to asbestos. Medical colleagues of the member for Simcoe—Grey know the dangers of asbestos. About 250 doctors and health care professionals sent her an open letter indicating that her ethical code of conduct as a physician requires her to influence her Conservative colleagues to change their position on asbestos. I would invite her to indicate that is what she is trying to do. Obviously, if she would do that, I would wish her success in her efforts. That would be quite a challenge for a member of a Conservative Party which last summer threatened to sue Michaela Keyserlingk, a widow whose husband Robert died of mesothelioma in 2009. Imagine this. Conservative Party operatives actually threatened to sue this widow for using the Conservative logo in her campaign against asbestos exports. Imagine the intimidation. What a disgrace. Members on that side of the House would be embarrassed to consider that their own party was threatening to sue a widow in this situation. It is horrendous.

It is shameful when we consider that according to the World Health Organization, about 125 million people in the world are exposed to asbestos in the workplace. Asbestos can come in various forms. We know the history in Canada. We used to hear about it being in ceiling tiles and various materials where it is not even solid and where we knew it was very dangerous. We were told that when it is with a bonding agent, as in concrete for example, it can be more stable for the time being. It can be in floor and ceiling tiles, insulating boards, roofing shingles, water supply lines, plastic filters, pipe covers, and vehicle parts. It can even be used in shipbuilding.

The problem is that when it is sent to a developing country or to a country like India, which is one of the growing powers these days, it can be cut, scraped, filed, sanded, or perhaps removed out of a building. When any of those things are done, workers need to take very careful precautions or they risk having it endanger their health. It can cause cancer. We know that those measures are not taken in many countries. We have a responsibility to act on the knowledge we have.

The World Health Organization estimates that one in every three deaths from occupational cancer is caused by asbestos. Contrary to the feeble Conservative excuses we have been hearing, the WHO says that all forms of asbestos are carcinogenic to humans and may cause mesothelioma and cancer of the lung, larynx and ovary. Asbestos exposure is also responsible for other diseases, such as asbestosis or fibrosis of the lung, pleural plaque, thickening and effusion.

• (1310)

The organization also calls for the addition of chrysotile asbestos to the list of hazardous chemical products under the Rotterdam convention. The Liberal Party has supported the addition of asbestos to the Rotterdam Convention because we know that scientific evidence has clearly established the health dangers of chrysotile asbestos.

Unfortunately, my colleagues on the government benches do not believe in scientific evidence. To confirm this, all we have to do is look at petitions they have taken on things like the census. Government members did not want the scientific information on that and what the experts were telling us about the importance of the census, the way it had been done before. They do not like it when it comes to their crime bill. They do not want to hear the facts or the evidence on that. They do not even want to listen to their very right-wing conservative friends in places in Texas, who are saying, “We tried that and it does not work”.

We see it in their attitude toward climate change. They do not want to listen to the scientists on that. They do not really believe in it. We see it in their attitude when they cut scientists at the Department of Fisheries recently. They are saying that we do not need much science. We are going to have a little of that less often, so we will not worry about whether the fish stocks are good this year as opposed to last year and whether they might change. We will just rely on the fact that we did a test a couple of years ago. That should be good for a while. That is the Conservatives' attitude toward science, so it should not be surprising to any of us that they have this attitude on this subject.

They have proved that attitude many, many times, but they do not like science. They do not trust science for some reason. They like to accept what they are told by the Prime Minister's Office. That much is clear. They proved that again in July of this year when Canada became the only country in the world to object to adding chrysotile asbestos to the Rotterdam Convention.

Adding it to the list would have forced exporters of asbestos to warn recipient countries of any health hazard. It is kind of a basic thing. These countries feel often that they are not well-equipped to handle asbestos safety, like India for example, and those countries could then refuse all imports of the fibre.

Canada is in fact the world's fifth largest exporter of asbestos, and we are also the largest exporter that also imposes severe restrictions on its use domestically. We are okay with exporting it, but we have severe restrictions, very tough rules about how it is handled in Canada. We know it is not enforced elsewhere when it is exported.

We should take a look at the projects, like the one going on next door in the West Block, where asbestos is being removed. There is a

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fence around the building, so members of Parliament cannot get in there and be exposed to it. I have not been inside because of that fence, but I trust that people who are working in there have masks and suits, and whatever else is required to ensure that they are not affected by it.

Obviously the big concern is inhaling asbestos into one's lungs, which can cause many of these diseases. That is a hypocritical position for us to be in as a country in view of that. We still export over 90% of the asbestos we produce to other countries, countries like India, knowing full well the proper precautions are not being taken by people who are handling these products.

The Catholic Women's League of Canada recently stated, “Canada is harming people's health by promoting its use and leading diplomatic opposition to the listing of chrysotile asbestos under the Rotterdam Convention”.

Canada's stellar reputation will continue to be tarnished until this gross injustice is addressed. We also need to address the domestic situation, and that is why it is important, as the motion suggests, that we deal with the communities that would suffer as a result of closing asbestos mines. We should be concerned about the health and well-being of people living in communities where there is asbestos mining.

I believe the motion strikes a proper balance and I hope that colleagues will support it.

• (1315)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we are having this debate today, I want to recognize Julius and Martina Hava, who are watching this very closely at home. Julius is basically in his final stages of asbestos-related cancer. Their experience in trying to get medical help for this as soon as possible has been very trying for them and now it is too late.

According to the World Health Organization, it is estimated that about 90,000 people die each year as a result of Canada mining asbestos. Canada is responsible for most of the deaths. Dying from cancer is a very frightening experience for the whole family. This is what Martina writes:

This cancer—caused by asbestos in actually given or I can say forced on people by Canadian government. Carol, my heart is dying knowing that my husband might not even live to be 57 years old, never mind to enjoy retirement age.

I ask my colleague, does he know whether or not the government invests money into research to ensure that this debilitating disease, this killing disease, is funded enough to give treatment to the people? How much is invested by the government? Would he happen to know that?

• (1320)

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate her comments about her friends who are suffering from asbestosis. I also appreciate her question about the science. In fact, she may have heard when I asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources if the government had research on the health impacts of asbestos. Her question is similar to that.

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I do not have the information on whether or not the government has done studies on this question of how to help people who are suffering from asbestosis and what the best means are, but I would encourage her to ask a Conservative member that question.

I would hope the Conservatives will bring forward and table in the House any independent scientific studies on both of these subjects.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is obvious in the early stages of this debate, which probably causes concern for anyone watching the debate and certainly anyone who has been following this file, is what the heck the government is thinking with regard to its position on the Rotterdam Convention.

I know that people who smoke make personal decisions. They are very well aware of the risk factors associated with smoking. We identify the risk factors on cartons and packages of cigarettes, but they are willing to accept those risks. However, the government's reluctance to support the Rotterdam Convention in identifying asbestos as a dangerous product befuddles me.

I would like my colleague's comments on what he believes is the reason the government is holding back on this particular issue. Why is it not joining with other nations and identifying this as a difficult material to work with?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, we heard the speaker before me talking about the chrysotile mining industry. He said it was worth \$2 billion. I do not think he said per year, but he was talking about large numbers in terms of economic impact, and I suppose that is the basis of the government's approach.

However, for most Canadians it would be very troubling to consider that, with all the scientific evidence we now have, we are the only country in the world that is standing in the way of adding chrysotile asbestos to the Rotterdam Convention's list of hazardous chemical products. That, to me, is alarming and worrying. It is time for the government to consider the scientific evidence, whether it likes science or not, and we know it is not keen on science, to take it seriously and list chrysotile asbestos.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the mover of the motion from the New Democratic Party and I want to say that we support this fully. We support this because of the scientific evidence that tells us that asbestos is a known carcinogen. The support of the motion speaks not only for the banning of the use and export of asbestos, the listing of it on the Rotterdam Convention. But it also speaks about looking at a plan for the transition of workers out of the asbestos industry and to retrain them to work in other industries as well as to look at new economic development modules or models for miners who are currently mining asbestos currently in Quebec to transition to a new workplace environment and a new job.

I support this because I want to put on the record that there is not a single, reputable, scientific authority in the world that does not agree that asbestos is a carcinogen. There is not a single scientific authority in the world that does not say that chrysotile asbestos can be safely used. When people say that chrysotile is different, all of the evidence and science around the world is telling us that it is not.

One of the things that has to concern us and the reason that we in Canada put asbestos in our own Hazardous Products Act is because

we know that it is dangerous. We know that it causes health effects. We heard from my colleague that it causes three known health effects right now, one of which is asbestosis which is a chronic disease of the lung. People cannot use their lung tissue to breathe, so it is a chronic obstructive lung disease as a result of that.

The second one is mesothelioma which is a very rare cancer that affects the chest and abdominal cavity, and is linked only to asbestos.

The third is lung cancer that is linked to asbestos.

Here are three known health hazards that not only cause chronic illness but also causes death. Between 90,000 to 100,000 people will die this year from asbestos-related disease, and 125 million people around the world, especially in developing countries and poorer countries, are subject to asbestos inhalation diseases. The government continues to fund this product and continues to put money into assisting with the mining of this product.

If we want to make good public policy it must be based on evidence and it must be based on the impact on human health. We have seen the evidence very clearly on this issue. There are strict restrictions in Canada. We know that the United States also has absolute restrictions on the use of asbestos. In 50 European countries, in fact the whole European Union no longer use asbestos and have a ban on it.

Going back to 1983, Iceland banned all types of asbestos, moving on with all of the Scandinavian countries into Hungary in 1988, Italy in 1992, and Germany in 1993. The list goes on. Even Brazil, which produces asbestos, is now saying that it is a carcinogen. We know all of this, that is the first thing. Let us deal with asbestos here at home. Let us move out of mining and let us help the workers with transition. Let us build new economic development modules within the area so that people can find work.

However, that is here at home. When we know that and we have asbestos under the Hazardous Products Act in our own country, as a physician I believe it is unethical for us to export this to other countries, especially countries that do not have good public health agencies and do not have good public health regulations. It is also unethical to ban its inclusion in the Rotterdam Convention that basically tells people around the world that this is a dangerous substance and directs them how to use it in as safe as possible a manner.

● (1325)

That is what is unethical about this: one, we do not think it is healthy here; two, we export it to other people while blocking information, knowledge and any kind of regulations on the fact that we want other people to know this is a hazardous product and that it can kill them or damage their health through chronic lung disease. That is the unethical part of it for me.

Business of Supply

The Quebec Workers' Compensation Board's statistics in 2009 said that 60% of all workplace-related deaths came from asbestos-related diseases. That is a strong statement. We also know that the Canadian Medical Association recently asked the government to ban it, to stop mining it, to stop exporting it and to put it in the Hazardous Products Act and the Rotterdam Convention as a minimum reasonable attitude toward it.

We know that the Rideau Institute asked the government to stop producing and exporting this lethal product. The Catholic Women's League, we have heard, also told the government to stop, so this does not come only from medical bodies or public health associations. All 16 public health offices in Quebec are calling for this action—all of them. The Quebec Public Health Association and the Canadian Public Health Association are calling for it. Health groups and non-governmental bodies that care about the health of people are calling for it. Of course, there was an open letter to one of the government members across the way, who is a physician, asking for that particular member to speak out and to have some sort of ethical attitude about the use of this product by her government.

We know that asbestos is everywhere. Many countries of the world use it for putting tanks on their rooftops to store water and mix it with cement to use it in floor tiles, roof tiles and walls. We know the minute these products are rubbed, the fibres of asbestos go into the air and into people's lungs. It cannot be stopped from getting into the air or people's lungs. There is no way we can stop asbestos from getting out of the format it is in. In the beginning it is in a format that is supposed to keep the fibres intact, but with wear and tear the fibres immediately go into the air and people are chronically exposed to it.

My colleague just shouted at me to imagine an earthquake. India and other countries that are using asbestos as insulation and for making buildings and laying tiles, et cetera, have had earthquakes. It is a double hazard, and it is something that we should no longer, as an ethical country, be exposing people to.

I will end with a quote from the Rideau Institute. It stated:

It is with sorrow and shame that we note that Canada is becoming a pariah on the international stage for its obstruction of global efforts to protect health, human rights and the environment.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot top that one. I think it is time we became an ethical nation again.

● (1330)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague. I worked in the removal of asbestos from buildings in downtown Toronto. I remember one day an entire site was shut down because a young woman who was hired was using a vacuum. She was not even in the asbestos zone, but when workers saw she did not have a mask, they shut the entire work site down because of the immediate threat to her health from just being on the floor without a mask.

The science exists. We know the devastating effects of asbestos, yet we also know that it is being imported into third world countries and put into cement mixers and being cut as tiles. There is no protection for workers. It seems to me that the government has made a decision that it is okay, in the interest of a few jobs, for people to be murdered in the third world because they somehow do not count as much as Canadian workers.

I would like to ask the member about our being an ethical nation and what it says about Canada on the world stage when, in order to maintain an industry that should have died long ago, we knowingly dump this level of carcinogen into third world countries without the protection that workers need.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, we have heard from many groups, including the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Public Health Agency and the Rideau Institute, all of which, for that very reason, are calling for Canada to have asbestos placed in annex III of the Rotterdam Convention at the very least.

Children are exposed to it. If people have been using asbestos in a building site, it is in the earth and children are playing with it. It is not very ethical, as the member said.

I travelled the world as a minister for the Canadian government, and Canada used to be looked up to as a nation of ethics, fairness and caring about others. We have to think about this. I do not understand how the government could continue to block putting this substance into the Rotterdam Convention.

● (1335)

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened quite carefully to the member's statements. She did acknowledge that she has had the opportunity to sit around the cabinet table and discuss issues like this.

My question is this: when did the epiphany happen among the members of the third party over there? When did they suddenly decide they were going to be outspoken critics on this issue? They were in government for 16 years and did zero, so when did the epiphany happen?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, in the last five or six years many countries have come to look at class actions suits on this issue, based on what every scientific piece of evidence is now showing us.

There was a time when everyone thought that chrysotile asbestos was safe. That has changed in the last few years. We may not have known about that evidence at the time, but now the evidence is clear, and there is no excuse for the government not to do the right thing. There is absolutely no excuse. It has been here for six years.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, Julius Hava and his wife are actually watching this on TV right now. He does not have much time left, unfortunately.

He wants to reiterate the fact that he was a federal government energy, mines and resources department worker and also worked in the mineral exploration industry. He is now unable to work, and this afternoon he is watching this debate.

Business of Supply

He could have tried to have treatment right away, at a cost of \$400,000 in the United States. My colleague mentioned that medical assistance is not available in third world countries; well, it is not available here either. There are only trials.

I am just wondering if the member could advise us why her government, when it was in government, did not do anything about it? Will the member be supporting this motion today?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, the motion says very little about medical treatment and accessibility to medical care, but of course this is an absolute essential. If people become ill from a public health hazard, then under medicare they should be treated when they get sick. That is a given. If that treatment is denied by provincial governments, then one needs to look at it under the Canada Health Act. That is a given.

However, it is not in this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few moments at the beginning of my speech to provide a history of the fight by asbestos workers. There are many key moments in this struggle. I think that we need to provide asbestos workers with immediate and proportionate help for all that they have done for this country for decades and for all the suffering that they have endured for close to 30 years now.

Why can the struggle of asbestos workers not be ignored? Let us go back to the very beginning. In the 19th century, a deposit of asbestos was discovered in the Asbestos region. For over half a century, people in the region worked under simply appalling conditions: even minimum workplace safety standards were not met and accidents occurred almost daily. Occupational health would have been more aptly described as occupational illness. People were sick on a regular basis.

Three other NDP members and I had a full day meeting with people from Asbestos at the end of the summer. Workers who are 50 or 60 years old told us about how, when they were young, they took their fathers lunch at the factory. When they opened the door, they could not recognize the fathers and mothers who worked there. They saw only shadows in a sort of opaque dust. They had to call out to their fathers, "Dad, it's me. I brought your lunch." Their fathers would appear to be a sort of shadow in a big cloud of dust inside the asbestos mine. These are the types of conditions that people experienced until 1949.

In 1949, there was an event known as the Asbestos strike. That was the key point in this whole story. For eight months, the workers in Asbestos battled with law enforcement, and the other asbestos miners across Quebec quickly joined in. The Duplessis government was in power during this period, which was referred to in Quebec as the great darkness. Our kindly premier at the time considered any action taken by the workers to be the work of big bad socialism, even though the workers were getting together to demand something as fundamental as the right to not die at work. Our good friend and premier at the time saw this as big bad socialism. The battle was difficult and cruel.

One important thing happened during that time. For the first time, because these people were so destitute and in so much pain, the clergy did not take the side of the government of the day, which was unthinkable at the time in Quebec. A large number of the clergy sided with the workers. This is what led historians to claim that the strike was one of the first steps towards the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, if not the very event that instigated the Quiet Revolution in Quebec.

Gérard Picard, president of the Confédération des travailleurs catholiques du Canada, was my mother's favourite uncle. During my childhood, he would often recount the entire battle. Mr. Picard, my great-uncle, was regularly arrested by law enforcement officials for no reason, for example, because his left turn signal was not on for a full eight seconds. This harassment went on for over a decade. It was a very long battle for such simple demands as working without dying of lung disease.

Canada is also indebted to the asbestos workers. Everyone here knows the Right Hon. Pierre Elliot Trudeau. Asbestos has traditionally been associated with the start of his political involvement. He and others, like the Hon. Jean Marchand, went on to have long careers in federal politics. They are the ones who worked with Lester B. Pearson, in what was probably the Liberal government most influenced by social democratic values at the time. For example, they are the ones who proposed the first plans for universal access to health care, student loans and the Canada pension plan. The battle fought by the asbestos workers is in part responsible for helping to instigate these fundamental changes in Canada. Quebeckers and Canadians must recognize the historic importance of the battle fought by the asbestos workers.

● (1340)

International consensus on the harmful effects of asbestos on public health is motivating the NDP to take a courageous political position and to call for the ban of the use and export of asbestos. We cannot forget that this international consensus means collapsed markets and unemployment and despair among hundreds of workers. These people have fought to modernize Quebec and Canada as few other groups of workers have. They deserve our complete solidarity, and they deserve it now.

I will quickly go over the different points of the NDP motion, which calls for stopping the export of asbestos and also assisting affected workers as soon as possible.

First, the government must "ban the use and export of asbestos". Internationally, the World Health Organization says that more than 107,000 people a year die from an asbestos-related cancer. The International Social Security Association—I have its report right here and we can see that it is rather lengthy—is calling for an outright ban on asbestos. In the United States, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has found that asbestos causes a number of different types of cancer. In Canada, since 2006, Health Canada has said that we cannot say that chrysotile asbestos is safe and we must choose to add it to the list of regulated substances. The Association des pneumologues de la province de Québec also favours banning asbestos mining.

Business of Supply

The thing that is important about this part of the motion is that the main buyers of Canadian asbestos are Indonesia, India and the Philippines. We had discussions with the asbestos people and I asked a question that I felt got at the heart of the problem: can we guarantee that the young construction worker in the Philippines or in Indonesia who, in 10, 15 or 20 years will be asked to tear off the shingles from hundreds of roofs, will remove shingles containing asbestos in accordance with the necessary labour standards, in other words, wearing a mask and gloves, removing one shingle at a time and disposing of it in a self-closing container? It is impossible. Even those who support the use of asbestos could not guarantee that in 5, 10, 15 or 20 years, we will not be poisoning a young worker in Indonesia. No one could reassure me on this. That is the crux of the problem. We can no longer bury our heads in the sand.

Second, the motion calls on the government to, “support international efforts to add chrysotile asbestos to the list of hazardous chemical products.” This is the third time this government has spoiled international efforts to include chrysotile asbestos on the UN’s list of hazardous materials. This is serious. It means that part of our Canadian diplomacy, which had such a good reputation in the 1970s and 1980s, until 1990, is currently supporting something that the entire international community condemns. Nearly everyone has been calling for a ban on asbestos. At the very least, it should be included on the list in order to send a clear message everywhere, from Korea to Indonesia, that it is a dangerous product. The government is involving Canada’s diplomats in all kinds of processes to prevent that.

Third, the motion calls on the government to, “assist affected workers by developing a Just Transition Plan”. The workers’ co-op in Asbestos, among others, has a long tradition of organization and job creation. It is such a key stakeholder in the economy there that it even owns shares in the mine. Imagine if funding like that given to the Chrysotile Institute—about \$2.3 million over 10 years—were given to those people to create jobs.

Finally, the last point, which is very important to me, calls on the government to, “support communities and municipalities in asbestos producing regions through an investment fund for regional economic diversification”. Over the past 35 years or so, nearly \$50 million in Canadian and Quebec public funds has been invested in supporting asbestos. That equals \$1.4 million a year. If we were to invest \$1.4 million in organizations like the local CFDC, we would be talking about a lot more than 300 short-term jobs for three or four months of the year. That would be the smarter choice.

• (1345)

Above all, the motion before us aims to put an end to the contempt being shown towards the people who work in the asbestos industry. I invite everyone to vote in favour of the motion, in order to immediately break the stalemate facing asbestos workers. Collectively, we owe it to them to lend our support as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but ask the member opposite why his party, which says that it stands for workers, will not stand with chrysotile workers in Quebec?

We know that the union that encompasses this industry does not support what the motion calls for. We also know that the motion goes even further than the people who are asking for the listing of chrysotile on the Rotterdam Convention.

That is the interesting point because I have in my hand a record of a vote from the National Assembly of Québec that shows that the member for Outremont voted against the inclusion of this on the Rotterdam Convention.

Could the member tell us if the member for Outremont, who is running for the leadership of the party, has changed his view, and could the member please tell us that the member for Outremont continues to support the workers of Quebec, or will he undermine them, as the motion calls for?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member one thing. My colleague from Outremont participated by telephone when we met with workers. His position is clear and straightforward: we must stop exporting asbestos. The scientific evidence gathered for years inescapably points to this conclusion. I have told the story of my great uncle and so I am the first to say that this is a sad, but inescapable conclusion. We must acknowledge the situation, as developed countries have, especially because we must quickly help workers in the asbestos industry with funding to meet their needs.

• (1350)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his excellent speech. I would like to add another aspect to this debate about asbestos: the issue of the environmental impact in Quebec. I know that, in recent years, it has come to light that asbestos has polluted the environment in Quebec.

[*English*]

In fact, the ambient pollution by asbestos in waterways and in the regions of Asbestos, Quebec, and its surroundings have led to the highest level of women with asbestos-related cancer documented anywhere in the world.

I wonder if he has any comments on that aspect.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, it is inescapable. Unfortunately, in the past 100 years and even recently, a significant number of workers have been victims of the market collapse. In Asbestos alone, 1,000 jobs have been lost in a small community of approximately 6,000 people. That would be equivalent to 900,000 people losing their jobs and having difficulty finding work in Toronto for 10 years. If Toronto had such a problem, there would have been a plan in place long ago to address it. The asbestos workers are suffering financially, and the member unfortunately is correct in saying that they are also the front-line victims of asbestos-related illnesses. I can therefore only concur with my colleague’s comments.

Business of Supply

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments. It is ironic and strange to see the Conservatives expressing so much hope for a better union in this case. I very clearly recall the courage and leadership shown by the hon. member for Outremont and the other NDP member from Quebec on this matter. The Conservatives are playing nasty political games when they say that workers and people in general must die in order to boost Quebecers' confidence in them. It is a question of morals and ethics. I wonder if my colleague could comment on that.

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for raising this particular issue. I do not have sufficient evidence to prove this, but I cannot help wondering: is the government's decision to support the industry proof that it has decided not to help these people? To hide behind the idea that there might be a recovery, despite the growing evidence that that industry has collapsed for good, is that not, in fact, just an excuse for not proposing an investment plan to help those people? I cannot help but wonder about this. It is up to the government to respond immediately.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues who have just spoken brilliantly on the subject, I would also like to speak in favour of the motion.

The NDP is a party that cares about the health and welfare of Canadians, and the present use and export of Canadian chrysotile asbestos runs directly counter to the health of our population. In addition, asbestos endangers the lives of the workers who are dangerously exposed to it in developing countries. To rectify this alarming situation, our party urges concrete measures such as are proposed by the NDP in the motion today.

First, it is important, and this must be the priority, to ban the use of this dangerous substance that leads to the development of fatal illnesses. It is important to know that all forms of asbestos disintegrate into finer and finer fibres that are invisible to the naked eye. When these fibres are inhaled by a human being, they can cause many fatal illnesses such as asbestosis and lung cancer. And there are facts to prove the extremely dangerous nature of this product.

In this country, more Canadians die because of asbestos than all other occupational and industrial causes combined, while in Quebec, where the mines are mainly located, asbestos is responsible for half of all work-related deaths.

Another concrete example is found in a study done in 2009. The study concluded that the concentration of asbestos in the outside air in Thetford Mines, Quebec, is 215 times higher than samples taken in the United States and elsewhere in Canada. The death rate associated with lung cancer and mesothelioma is 17 times higher there than in the general population.

Experts from various fields have also spoken out on the question of the toxicity of chrysotile asbestos, but the government does not seem to be interested in hearing them, let alone in acknowledging their expertise. Internal Health Canada documents show that, back in 2006, officials refuted the Conservatives' assertion that chrysotile asbestos was safe but the Conservatives preferred to close their eyes.

The Confederation of National Trade Unions, or CSN, has supported ending asbestos mining in the province, but the Conservative government has not heard it.

At the international level, the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization agree that there is no safe level of exposure to asbestos. But the Conservative government continues to outrageously tarnish our international reputation, a reputation we have worked so hard to build in recent decades.

Asbestos is a hazardous material, and asbestos mining has decreased significantly since the late 1990s. This sector is just not profitable any more, and an economic transition plan similar to the one for the tobacco industry is urgently needed. In 1991, Quebec asbestos mines employed 1,000 workers. Today, only 350 people work three to four months per year in Thetford Mines. LAB Chrysotile Inc. has entered bankruptcy protection and plans on closing its doors next November.

Instead of reviewing the dangers inherent in this economic sector and supporting miners' families, the government has chosen the criminal approach of subsidizing 160 trade delegations to 60 countries to promote asbestos exports abroad.

Using taxpayers' money, these delegations have promoted our supposedly safe asbestos in order to score big sales, primarily in developing countries that do not have the safe handling practices that we have in Canada.

In terms of our miners' health costs, a study of disability claims for 691 workers suffering from asbestos-related illnesses indicates that these costs topped \$66 million in 2000 alone.

Canada cannot afford to gamble with workers' health or taxpayers' money, money that the government continues to misallocate. The NDP has been asking for a ban on asbestos exports for a long time because asbestos is causing serious illnesses and death in developing countries.

In Canada, the use of asbestos is now strictly regulated under the Hazardous Products Act.

• (1355)

That is not the case in a number of developing countries, where legislation on hazardous products has not yet come into effect or where the regulatory bodies do not yet have the resources to deal with lawbreakers.

It is estimated that asbestos causes more than 100,000 deaths a year worldwide. Workers in the developing countries to which Canada exports its asbestos are not usually aware of the safety measures for handling asbestos, and they do not receive any training in that regard, either.

Indonesia, India and the Philippines are currently the main buyers of our asbestos and we all know that their workers do not have basic health and safety protection. While asbestos is banned in more than 50 countries, including the most developed countries, Canada continues to export its asbestos without warning labels about its toxicity. Worse yet, the government has even tried to dissuade Thailand and North Korea from issuing a toxicity warning on the bags of asbestos they receive. The government considered that these warning measures, which would show a skull and crossbones, were excessive.

The NDP believes we should support international efforts in favour of adding chrysotile asbestos to the list of hazardous chemical products under the Rotterdam Convention. Since 2006, the government has obstructed international efforts to add asbestos to the United Nations' list of hazardous products three times so far. We absolutely must rectify this situation that embarrasses and shames us in the eyes of the international community.

• (1400)

[English]

Mr. Barry Devolin: Order, please. I must interrupt at this time. The hon. member will have three minutes remaining when the House returns to this matter.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour Deohaeko, a group of families committed to promoting the social inclusion and valued participation of people with disabilities.

In 1994, they designed and built Rougemont Co-operative in my riding, home of over 200 people of widely diverse backgrounds, including adults with intellectual disabilities. In the co-op, Deohaeko has created an environment recognized internationally for helping adults with an intellectual disability, often stigmatized and treated as a burden, to become resilient and resourceful for themselves and make a significant contribution to their communities.

I thank the Deohaeko Support Network for the pioneering work it has done to improve people's lives. It has created a model for people with intellectual disabilities to lead a better life in their community.

* * *

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMY

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the world of pulp and paper, the Laurentide mill in Grand-Mère plans on halting production on its No. 10 machine, which will directly or indirectly affect hundreds of jobs.

Entire chunks of our heritage are disappearing because of the world paper crisis. We must use some imagination to put our regions back to work, and we are still waiting for the government to take concrete action to do so. It is easy for the current government to

Statements by Members

make our public institutions disappear, one by one, under the cover of budget cuts, but it must propose a coherent vision of what our regional economies will look like in the future.

* * *

[English]

JUNIOR FOOTBALL

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Hilltops have done it again. In what is turning into a bit of rivalry, both on the field and, dare I say, on this side of the House, the Saskatoon Hilltops have once again defeated the Vancouver Island Raiders this past Saturday in the Canadian Junior Football League semifinal.

Last year, I had the pleasure of hosting my colleague, the member for Nanaimo—Alberni, in Saskatoon where my colleagues and I won a friendly bet on the outcome of the 2010 Canadian bowl final.

I congratulate the Saskatoon Hilltops and wish them all the best as they take on the Hamilton Hurricanes this coming Saturday when they defend their Canadian Junior Football League championship title.

* * *

GROUND OBSERVER CORPS WINGS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize James Hodder, formerly of St. Bernard's and now St. Lawrence in my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's.

As a postmaster and telegraph operator in the 1950s, Mr. Hodder volunteered as a chief observer with the Royal Canadian Air Force Ground Observer Corps. In 1957, after three years of outstanding service identifying and documenting all low-flying planes, he was awarded the Ground Observer Corps Wings.

Unfortunately, those wings commemorating his patriotic service to his country were lost. Mr. Hodder's wife, Nella, of 43 years, knew he was distraught over the loss. Not knowing exactly where to turn, Mrs. Hodder started making inquiries and called my office wondering how she could secure another set of wings for her husband.

On September 1, along with acting wing commander Major Luc Girouard and Chief Warrant Officer Joe Burns, I had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Hodder presented with another set of wings.

An appreciative Mr. Hodder declared, "This is a wonderful day, a very good day, I will never forget this".

Today I ask all members of the House to join me in telling Mr. Hodder that we will never forget him and the service that he and other veterans give and continue to give to our country.

*Statements by Members***MEDAL OF BRAVERY**

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure, this past Friday, October 28, to attend a ceremony at Rideau Hall, where constituents Matt Jackson and Tyler Lockerby were bestowed the medal of bravery by His Excellency, the Governor General of Canada.

In June 2009, Matt and Tyler risked their lives to rescue four people from a submerged vehicle near Revelstoke, British Columbia. They witnessed the van in front of them swerve out of control, roll down an embankment and plunge into Griffen Lake. Jumping into the frigid waters, Matt dove under and pulled three victims out through the driver's side window, passing them to Tyler, who brought them to shore. With the fourth person still strapped inside the rapidly sinking vehicle, Matt and Tyler made their way back and managed to pull the last victim out through the broken window.

Thanks to the quick and brave actions of Mr. Jackson and Mr. Lockerby, all four victims survived.

On behalf of the constituents of Kelowna—Lake Country, it is my great pleasure to congratulate Matt and Tyler and to thank them for their courage and bravery. We are so fortunate to have these heroes as members of our community and our great country.

* * *

● (1405)

ROUGE PARK, ONTARIO

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I was pleased to participate in the biodiversity walk in Rouge Park, as well as the opening of the new viewing platform overlooking the majestic park and Little Rouge Creek.

Rouge Park, located in the northeastern part of my constituency, is one of Canada's urban gems. Volunteers provide guided nature walks year-round for all interested. These very educational and interesting walks teach participants about the biodiversity in Rouge Park and the efforts that this park is taking to combat climate change. They are a great way to learn more about the flora and fauna of our area, as well as a great way to spend time with family, friends and loved ones in our great outdoors. I would like to thank the volunteers who conduct these walks.

People from across all party lines and at all levels of government support the naming of Rouge Park as Canada's first urban national park. I am happy to be working with my colleagues and community members to see this dream come true.

I encourage my fellow members of Parliament to support Rouge Park and everyone in the area to come out and participate in one of Rouge Park's biodiversity walks.

* * *

DIWALI MILAN CELEBRATION

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, I had the pleasure of attending the 2011 Diwali Milan celebrations organized by the Rajasthan Association of North America-Canada, a non-profit organization with a mission of preserving and promoting Rajasthan culture, values, heritage and

traditions from within Canada and educating current and future generations about their motherland, while enjoying the crisp freedoms that life in Canada allows them.

Part of the celebration was the awards ceremony where outstanding individuals were recognized for their achievements, hard work and dedication in promoting the culture, values and heritage of Rajasthan.

I take this opportunity to thank the president of RANA Canada, Mr. Yogesh Sharma, and his team for the tireless work, dedication and leadership. I also congratulate the honourable recipients of individual awards: Perna Khandelwal, Mahendra Bhandari, Ashok Khandelwal, Ekta Mantri and Shalini Vyas, and RANA Business Excellence Award recipient Globeways Canada Inc.

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FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, summer has come to an end, fall harvest is under way and, before winter sets in, another hunting season in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex is upon us. It is a time when rural and urban hunters in my area get together to replenish the freezer of many people: family, friends and those who struggle to make ends meet.

Bringing an end to the long gun registry is yet another step our Conservative government is taking toward a Canada that protects the innocent, lives by the rule of law, encourages personal responsibility and respects the rights of Canadians, whether they live in the city or the country.

Legislation has been launched, and another promise to Canadians will be kept. Long gone will be the long gun registry.

* * *

[Translation]

YVON BOIVIN

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize Yvon Boivin's exceptional commitment to the people of Trois-Rivières and his involvement in the community.

In my riding and other neighbouring ridings, over 850 families are seeing their life savings disappear as a result of the discovery of pyrrhotite in the concrete foundations of their homes.

Instead of merely seeking to solve his own problem, Mr. Boivin chose to act as a leader and to counsel and defend the many victims of pyrrhotite by chairing the Coalition Proprio-Béton.

For the victims, the consequences are just as devastating as those of the flooding in Montérégie, for example. However, the time it will take to get back to normal is much longer and there are far fewer support measures in place.

I would therefore like to commend Mr. Boivin for his civic engagement and assure him of my ongoing support in obtaining a fair and equitable solution from the Government of Canada.

Statements by Members

•(1410)
[English]

ANN SOUTHAM

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the finest human qualities is generosity. The late Ann Southam, who died in November 2010, knew that.

Ann Southam, a celebrated music composer and Order of Canada recipient, left a generous endowment of \$14 million to the Canadian Women's Foundation, the largest single donation a community-based Canadian women's organization has ever received from any individual. Her gift will fuel the foundation's important work of investing in programs that move women and girls out of violence and poverty and into confidence and success.

By supporting the Canadian Women's Foundation, Ann Southam's legacy of generosity will empower countless women and girls across Canada.

I encourage Canadians to celebrate the generosity and vision of Ann Southam today.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the government's abuse of its power and the dangerous path it is taking the country down.

In Bill C-19, Ending the Long-gun Registry Act, we see the Conservatives giving in to their worst instincts in proposing to destroy all the data. Their solution to a registry that cost too much to establish in the first place is to commit to spending millions more to wipe out the records from that same registry, untold millions more.

The government was not given a mandate in the last election to have a bonfire of the vanities—in fact, two bonfires, one for the data and another one for the \$2 billion that has already been spent.

From shutting down debate on the Wheat Board to building prisons for crimes the government cannot find, the 60% of Canadians who opposed the government are proving it right that we need electoral reform in the country to have it truly represented in the government of the day. If ever a government has made that case, it is this government.

If the provinces and the police want the data, why will the government not simply give it to them?

* * *

[Translation]

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, October is Women's History Month in Canada. This year's theme is "Women in Canadian Military Forces: A Proud Legacy".

[English]

It highlights the important contributions of women to the Canadian military forces throughout Canada's history. It is an ideal time to learn about their stories, celebrate their achievements and be inspired by their courage and perseverance.

Women such as Shirley Robinson, who served with distinction in the Canadian military, dedicating herself to removing gender-based barriers, and Susan Wigg, who was one of the first women to attend Royal Military College, should be acknowledged for their hard work. Both of these outstanding women have been recognized for addressing gender-based issues and for helping make the Canadian Forces more inclusive.

[Translation]

Canadian men and women should be inspired by their example and the example of other women who help defend freedom, democracy and human rights.

* * *

[English]

BRAIN TUMOUR AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the last day of Brain Tumour Awareness Month in Canada. This may come as a surprise to some of my colleagues in the House.

[Translation]

For too many Canadians—more than 50,000 of them—their brain tumour diagnosis also came as a surprise.

[English]

As we have all experienced through family and friends, and even through some of our colleagues here, cancer does not discriminate and can strike quickly.

Thousands today do not even know yet that they have this increasingly common, through often hard-to-detect, form of cancer.

[Translation]

New technologies and treatments mean that, these days, this disease is less often fatal, but with improvements to come, we can make that a guarantee.

[English]

An increasing number of survivors are also coping better and living more normal lives. They walk these halls and pass us on the street. They are not simply enduring their struggle; they are thriving and winning.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to be able to both celebrate them and increase awareness by highlighting Brain Tumour Awareness Month.

* * *

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 93 years ago, at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the guns of the First World War fell silent. On November 11, our nation will pause to remember the generations of Canadians who have bravely served our country, and we will honour those who continue to serve today.

Oral Questions

With the First World War centennial approaching, let us take a moment to remember some of the historic milestones that contributed to our proud military heritage and helped shape our country: the Battle of Passchendaele, the Battle of the Somme, the Battle of Beaumont Hamel and the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Throughout these battles, regiments from across the country fought together to forge a new and stronger sense of Canadian identity.

This important chapter in our history must not be lost, and we should all encourage young Canadians to take an active role in remembrance by taking an active role ourselves.

Lest we forget.

* * *

● (1415)

ASBESTOS

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite years of opposition to the government's policy on asbestos from average Canadians, scientists and the worldwide community, we now see that division is beginning to appear in the government's own benches on this important file. The member for Sarnia—Lambton told the media, "I'm definitely not supporting the mining or exporting of asbestos".

We know there are more. We know there is growing opposition among Conservative MPs on just how out of touch the government position on asbestos really is.

However, there is a chance for Conservative MPs to stand in the House, to stand with Canadians, to stand with the worldwide community and to stand up for a just transition. All that is needed is for the Prime Minister's office to allow Conservative MPs who agree with New Democrats on asbestos to stand in their place and vote to turn the page on asbestos.

It will be a great day for Canada's reputation on the world stage, a great day for health and safety of workers and a great day for democracy.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the IMF's annual review of Canada supports the government's plan to return to balanced budgets in the medium term.

As the Minister of Finance said:

Thanks to our sound and stable economy and measures taken in the Next Phase of Canada's Economic Action Plan, the IMF is maintaining its positive outlook for Canada.

The IMF statement endorses the measures taken by the government to promote the long-term stability of Canada's housing market, including changes in the rules for government-backed insured mortgages.

The statement confirms our financial sector is solid, noting the government's "high prudential standards and rigorous supervision". The statement recognizes substantial progress in advancing international and domestic financial sector reforms.

The IMF welcomes our intention to launch a Canadian securities regulator.

Although GDP is up for August, the global economy is still fragile. That is why our government is implementing our low-tax plan to create jobs and economic growth. Our plan is working.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the latest GDP numbers show a stagnation of the economy with one exception, the oil and gas sector, thanks to the Conservatives' favouritism. However, high productivity sectors like manufacturing and infrastructure were flat or down.

Is this not further evidence that we should prolong the stimulus package and target high productivity sectors?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's position is that we should keep going down the path that we are on because it is working. The IMF says so. The World Bank says so. Today StatsCan again says so. What we are doing is working.

Since the worst part of the recession in July 2009, the Canadian economy has produced over 650,000 jobs, more than 80% of which are full-time jobs. We are getting the job done for Canadians and that is why they have entrusted our government to continue focusing on the economy.

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not only are Conservatives refusing to act to help our economy, they are also turning off the taps of the previous stimulus package.

The city of Hamilton stands to lose \$7.8 million in infrastructure funding today. There is no reason for the government not to invest the money that was budgeted for infrastructure.

Why not ensure that every penny allocated to stimulate the economy will actually go to stimulate the economy?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would simply point out for the Leader of the Opposition that our economic action plan has indeed worked. The Auditor General took a look at our economic action plan, the way in which we were investing our funds and said that we did it prudently and responsibly. It is true that the stimulus spending has ended and that the stimulus spending had the positive effects that we intended.

Now we are moving to the next chapter of our economic action plan, which is drive to a balanced budget, while putting in place policies that drive up economic growth and create jobs for Canadians. It is what we promised to do. It is what we are going to do.

● (1420)

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this does not help the economy.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

The GDP numbers should wake the Conservatives up. The economy needs further stimulus, not an abrupt end to the money already promised.

In Saint-Eustache, for instance, work was delayed because of federal red tape. The city is not to blame, but the Conservatives are using that as an excuse to cut funding for the bridge to Îles Corbeil.

Instead of cutting off the stimulus funding, why not prolong or even expand the program?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we already extended our process in order to allow that project to be completed. We created a responsible, effective process for the entire economy, and we worked on that process with the municipalities and the provinces.

Let us be clear, however: our process, our program, our economic action plan and our plan to deal with this crisis are all working. We are creating jobs. Our economic system is improving. Our work is not done yet. Our work will be done when all Canadians can find the jobs they need, and we will continue on the same path with next year's budget.

* * *

[English]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government pretends to support victims, but now it is moving to scrap years worth of gun registry records. Victims of tragedies like the shooting at l'École Polytechnique want these records kept. Police chiefs want them. Provinces want them. However, the government refuses to listen.

The government is planning a \$2 billion bonfire. Why is it ignoring the pleas of victims and their families? Why will it not put public safety first?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that this question is coming from a member who has voted against every public initiative that actually protects victims.

Perhaps there is something that she should know. Just because the Liberals spent \$2 billion on a long gun registry does not mean it is worth anything. In fact, the only thing it does is target law-abiding Canadian citizens improperly and is obtrusive in their private affairs.

Let us make it very clear. Our government will focus on issues that deal with victims.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the government were to introduce bills that made sense and were supported by a majority of Canadians, we would be happy to support them. Every day, more voices are joining the outcry in Quebec and calling for the government to keep the data from the firearms registry. The National Assembly, police chiefs, families of victims of murder and suicide, groups advocating for abused women and, more recently, a large construction union, the FTQ, have all said that the data on file must be preserved.

Why is the government going to spend money on destroying useful information instead of spending money on enhancing police protection—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Public Safety.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Police Association has said that it is quite satisfied with the efforts this government has made to work on behalf of front-line police officers, especially with respect to the comprehensive justice legislation, Bill C-10, which the member opposes. If she wants anything else, perhaps she could speak to her colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore who said that the registry itself gives people a false sense of security over gun control and gun safety. He is in favour of getting rid of it. Why is she not?

* * *

GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Public Works and Government Services. I wonder if the minister can tell us whether she considers the work of the fairness officer in assessing the value of the contract with respect to the building of ships was an important and integral part of that entire process.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, where it is necessary and we think it is valuable, we employ fairness monitors to be a part of procurement. In this situation, with the shipbuilding procurement strategy, it was invaluable.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the Minister of Public Works and Government Services feels that it was invaluable, I wonder if I could ask her colleague, the Minister of National Defence, why a similar process would not be followed with respect to the F-35s.

The prime minister of Holland, the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1425)

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Toronto Centre has the floor. Members should hold off on their comments.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, while the government figures out who is going to answer this very tricky question, if it is good enough for the ships, why is it not good enough for the planes?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only person who had trouble—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage has the floor.

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, the only person who had trouble with the question was the Liberals in taking three tries to spit it out.

Oral Questions

However, the answer is that we are going down the road to ensuring that the Canadian Forces have the equipment that they need. As we have said time and again, the reality is that the greatest threat to the health and safety of the men and women of the Canadian Forces should never be their equipment. What we saw under 13 years of Liberal rule was a constant degrading of the Canadian Forces' budgets, and that can never happen again. If the leader of the Liberal Party does not like the process with regard to the F-35s, all he has to do is look to his left and look to his right, because it is his party that started it.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I clearly heard a personal insult directed at me. Frankly, I am astonished that the minister would stoop so low. I am not going to return the minister's insults; instead, I am going to ask him a question.

If the use of a fairness officer is good enough for the ships, why is it not good enough for the planes? It is a very simple and direct question.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the answer is the same whether the question is asked in French or in English. Our process has been clear from the outset. We will ensure that the men and women of the Canadian Forces have the equipment they need to do their job—the job that Parliament and our government is asking them to do. That is what we have done here. The F-35s are a success for these women and men, and we are going to continue with our process.

* * *

[English]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats joined all Canadians in mourning the tragic loss of Master Corporal Byron Greff on Saturday. Master Corporal Greff and 16 others were struck by a suicide bomb on the outskirts of Kabul.

Will the Prime Minister give the House an update on his current view of the security situation our troops are now facing in Afghanistan?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member, I think all members present would share in expressing our condolences to the family of Master Corporal Greff, who gave his life courageously in Afghanistan.

It is a reminder of the unlimited liability assumed by members of the Canadian Forces and our allies in that mission. No one would suggest that the risks will ever be zero in that country, given the current security climate.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last November the Prime Minister assured Canadians that this new training and aid mission in Afghanistan would involve “minimal risks to Canada”. Now, tragically, we see that just is not the case.

We still have 950 troops stationed in Afghanistan. Their families need an honest assessment about the true risks of this new mission.

Why has the Prime Minister not been more clear and straightforward about the real risks our soldiers are facing in Kabul?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Let us be frank, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that this training mission is in a different configuration. It does not involve combat. It does not involve searching and engaging the enemy. It involves training in a static base form in and around Kabul.

There is no way to eliminate all risk, given the reality of that country. Given the security climate there, we can never mitigate that risk to zero, as I just said, but we certainly want to support our men and women in uniform with equipment. We want to support them morally, and that is what this government—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beaches—East York.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the F-35s, the Minister of National Defence seems now to be at odds with everyone.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer sees cost overruns of \$53 million per plane. U.S. Senator John McCain sees a train wreck coming. Last week reports surfaced that the minister's friends in cabinet and the Prime Minister's Office are questioning the minister's ability to manage this file.

When will the Minister of National Defence admit he has botched this file and send the contract out to tender?

● (1430)

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2001 Canada participated in the extensive and rigorous U.S.-led competition process where two bidders developed and competed prototype aircraft—

Mr. Stéphane Dion: Observer—

Hon. Julian Fantino: Excuse me.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. If members use up all their time when a minister is giving an answer, they may find themselves short of a question.

The Associate Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Speaker, partner nations were engaged during the competitive process, and this led to the selection of the Lockheed Martin and its partner agencies as the joint fighter manufacturer for our needs at this time and well into the future.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems that every week the opposition asks a straightforward question and every week the Minister of National Defence fails to answer it.

*Oral Questions***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

It is a simple but very important question, so I will ask it again. When will the Conservatives finally admit that the F-35 scheme is in a tailspin? When will they start putting Canadian taxpayers first, cancel the F-35 and establish a transparent and competitive process for the replacement of the CF-18?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, through a process launched by the previous Liberal government in the late 1990s—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The minister has been asked a question and he has the right to answer it. The hon. minister has the floor.

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada determined that the F-35 is the best and only aircraft that meets the needs of Canada's armed forces.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week a Commonwealth summit was held in Australia and discussions were held on human rights. Australia and Great Britain raised the issue of decriminalizing homosexuality. Sadly, homosexuality is a crime in 41 of the 54 Commonwealth countries. Decriminalizing homosexuality is a fundamental human rights issue.

Can the Prime Minister confirm whether he raised the issue of homosexual rights at the summit?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the promotion of human rights abroad is a central part of Canada's foreign policy. At the Commonwealth meetings last week, Canada was outspoken on the criminalization of homosexuality. We spoke very strongly against it. We will continue to work with our allies, like the United Kingdom and Australia, on this issue in the days, weeks, months and, regrettably, years to come.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, this weekend in Perth, Canada failed to get the Commonwealth to move on this basic human rights question. What we need is for every Commonwealth leader who believes in ending the state persecution of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and the transgendered to step up right now.

The government has a historic opportunity to provide leadership on this issue which it claims to care about. Could the minister tell me, why did the government fail in Perth? What is the government's plan to take action now to assert leadership on this issue in the Commonwealth?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me assure the hon. member opposite and colleagues on all sides of the House that Canada was the loudest voice on this issue in Perth. We spoke out strongly against it. It is very clear, regrettably, that we will not see immediate changes in this regard, but it is important that we continue to push for human rights, whether it is for gays and lesbians, whether it is for religious freedom, whether it is for women, whether it is for other persecuted minorities. Canadians can count on this government to continue to fight for those issues.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the arrest of Mr. Al-Atar, an Edmonton imam, while participating in the hajj is part of a larger problem. Amnesty International has raised concerns about the ill treatment of Saudi prisoners and the country's continued use of the death penalty. This is no place for Canadians to be stranded without government support.

What is the minister doing to improve the treatment of Canadians detained in Saudi Arabia?

• (1435)

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Al-Atar was released from detention today, thanks to the good work of our consular officials and the co-operation of our partners in Saudi Arabia. I can assure the member that we are committed to providing the same level of assistance for all Canadians. However, each case is unique, and these cases are very often complex.

We will continue to work with our partners to ensure due process and the well-being of Canadians in distress in Saudi Arabia, as we do for Canadians all over the world.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for months now there have been a number of worrisome cases of Canadians imprisoned in Saudi Arabia. Even more worrisome is how they are being treated. Among them, there is a young man from my riding, Mohamed Kohail. He has been in prison for almost five years and his family still does not know what to expect. He recently contracted tuberculosis in prison and he is gravely ill.

What is the government doing to ensure that Mohamed Kohail gets a fair trial and receives the necessary medical attention?

[*English*]

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada will continue to pursue all avenues to assist Mr. Kohail. A retrial is currently in process for Mohamed Kohail. The last hearing took place this past May. Our government has continuously raised this case with Saudi officials. In total, six ministers and two parliamentary secretaries have raised this matter with top Saudi officials as well. Consular officials are actively providing assistance and support and remain in regular contact with the Kohail family and its legal counsel.

Our government will continue to work—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Quebec.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

VETERANS

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in five days a former soldier, Pascal Lacoste, will go on a hunger strike outside the offices of the Minister of Veterans Affairs. He is taking this extreme measure to protest the department's lack of action. He has been fighting for 11 years to be heard. Although he is only 38, he is seriously ill after being exposed to depleted uranium, primarily in Bosnia.

Time is running out. Why has the department done nothing in 11 years? What does the Minister of Veterans Affairs plan on doing in order for Mr. Lacoste to receive all—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the health and well-being of all our veterans is a priority for our government.

[English]

As soon as this case was brought to the minister's attention, officials were asked to follow up immediately to ensure that this gentleman is receiving all of the benefits to which he is entitled.

I want to be very clear. Our government is maintaining all veterans' benefits.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' preoccupation with Arctic defence is proving to be more rhetoric than reality. If they did care about defending our northern sovereignty, they would not be buying a plane that cannot communicate in the Arctic, cannot land in the Arctic, and cannot refuel anywhere. The F-35 simply does not meet Canada's needs.

Therefore, when will the Conservative government hold an open competition to determine the aircraft best suited to all of our needs, including the Arctic?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the rhetoric around this issue has gone on for an awfully long time. However, the reality is that back in 1997, the Liberal government of the day started this project.

It is the best aircraft for the men and women of our military today and into the future, and as well to ensure that we have control over our sovereignty in years to come.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why do we not go back to Laurier?

The minister considers it a successful procurement if a plane cannot refuel anywhere, cannot land in the Arctic, cannot communicate in the Arctic, and has only one engine to boot. Instead of holding an open competition to get best value for money, the Conservatives lecture the world on fiscal responsibility.

With structural deficits as far as the eye can see, why can the Conservatives not control the skyrocketing costs of the F-35?

● (1440)

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, reasonable people agree that we need aircraft to defend Canadian sovereignty. We will ensure that our men and women in uniform have the best equipment to do their jobs safely and effectively. We expect communications of our aircraft and all other aspects to be in place and that they will exceed current and future capabilities.

The F-35 will ensure that Canada's interests at home and abroad will be well served.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the total cost of the F-35s is now more than \$30 billion, even though the government is denying it. With such a large financial commitment, we must have guaranteed economic spinoffs for Canadian companies, but the Conservatives are dropping the ball. Thirty billion dollars in expenditures and no guaranteed economic spinoffs. That is a fine present for Lockheed Martin in Texas.

When will the Prime Minister admit that an open and public tendering process is needed to guarantee jobs and the economic future of Canada's aerospace industry?

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to infuse a dose of reality into this whole argument.

Recently I saw first-hand the direct benefits of economic growth and job creation at Magellan Bristol Aerospace in Winnipeg, as well as that which has taken place in over 60 other companies across the land.

It is not only about the F-35; it is about jobs, it is about economic growth, and it is about providing our men and women with the best tools they need to do their job.

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[Translation]

ASBESTOS

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, I had the honour to table in the House a motion to prohibit the use and mining of asbestos. The evidence is clear: asbestos is an industrial killer. Yet the government continues to blindly support this industry. Canada is the only member country of the United Nations to oppose the inclusion of asbestos on a list of hazardous materials.

Who is this government defending: the workers and families who are the victims of asbestos or large corporations?

Oral Questions

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has promoted the safe and controlled use of chrysotile asbestos domestically and internationally for more than 30 years. Recent scientific reviews confirm that chrysotile fibres can be used safely under controlled conditions. The government respects provincial jurisdiction over the development of natural resources. The NDP would put entire communities out of work and put those workers permanently on welfare. These are the people we are protecting.

[*English*]

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, reasonable voices across the country are standing up to the government's support of deadly asbestos.

Here is just one: "I have made the decision that the production and export of asbestos is contrary to the best interests of Canadians".

Do members know who said that? It was Dona Cadman, the former Conservative member for Surrey—North.

Will the government finally act in the best interests of Canadians and support the New Democratic motion to ban asbestos?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, scientific reviews confirm that chrysotile fibres can be used safely under controlled conditions.

Our government respects provincial jurisdiction over the development of natural resources.

The hon. member should appreciate the efforts that are being put in place to avoid a ban of nickel, and it is the same thing for chrysotile asbestos.

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is tying itself up in knots in trying to justify its position on asbestos.

Here is an interesting quote:

I'm definitely not supporting the mining or exporting of asbestos.... [The natural resources minister] is certainly bringing the issue forward to the cabinet level for more discussion.

Who said that? It was the member for Samia—Lambton.

Can the Minister of Labour explain to the House what cabinet decided to do about the Conservative hypocrisy on asbestos and give us something other than a tape recorder?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has promoted the safe use of chrysotile domestically and internationally for more than 30 years. Scientific reviews confirm that chrysotile fibres can be used safely under controlled conditions.

The government respects provincial jurisdiction over the development of natural resources. The NDP would put entire communities out of work and put those workers on permanent welfare.

•(1445)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is the inaction of this government that is putting workers in a mess.

The asbestos mine workers are worried. Asbestos is a hazardous product. The industry is dying and is no longer even supported by the entire Conservative caucus. Despite all that, it is not getting any help from this government. This government prefers to put short-term profits ahead of the long-term well-being of the asbestos workers and victims. This is unacceptable.

Will this government do the right thing and facilitate the transition of the workers and their families to other sources of income as soon as possible?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has promoted the safe use of chrysotile at home and abroad for more than 30 years. This is a policy that has been supported by the chrysotile asbestos industry workers, as a matter of fact. I do not know what planet the hon. member has been living on to have such concerns, but I can say that they are unfounded because it is the workers who came up with this safe use policy. Let us be clear: chrysotile fibre can be safely used in a controlled environment, under the regulations in effect.

Our government respects the jurisdiction of the provinces over natural resources development.

* * *

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend members of the Islamic Shia Ithna-Asheri Association of Edmonton learned that their imam, Mr. Al-Atar, was detained without charges in Saudi Arabia.

The member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont went with his son to meet with this community and its leader to hear their concerns and relayed these to the minister's office directly.

Today we are happy to learn that Mr. Al-Atar has been released by Saudi authorities.

At the risk of repeating good news, could the Minister of State please tell the House how the government quickly reacted to learning of Mr. Al-Atar's detention and ultimately assisted in obtaining his release?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, after being informed of Mr. Al-Atar's arrest, the government made representations to local authorities and senior Saudi officials. We were also in contact with his wife in Canada yesterday and today.

I thank the member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont for his excellent work over the weekend liaising with my office. The government is pleased that our concerns about Mr. Al-Atar's situation were addressed in a timely manner and that he has been released.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

TREASURY BOARD

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, we are concerned about the flawed accounting practices that seem to be the norm at the Treasury Board. In 2007-08, Parliament approved \$50 million over five years for the Perimeter Institute, which is an excellent institute, by the way, but according to information from the Receiver General of Canada, the institute received \$127 million, which is 1,200 times the annual maximum approved by Parliament.

Could the President of the Treasury Board rise and explain what happened? Where is the money?

[English]

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP is flat wrong again. It is quite unfortunate that whoever is helping the member did not do his or her math before the NDP members decided to go on with these tactics.

The fact is that in 2007, 2008 and 2009 funds were drawn from government resources, just as we said in the budget, and then subsequent public accounts.

I would recommend that the member consult the public accounts. He can do that. For all the other members who are leading to this misinformation for Canadians, the member continues to be—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleague to visit his optometrist.

After overspending the 2009 budget, did they learn their lesson? Obviously not. Once again this year, although the institute should have received \$10 million, it was granted \$44 million, but the institute never received this money. Strangely enough, this reminds me of another story involving the President of the Treasury Board that has to do with a fund and millions of dollars that were diverted, or something like that. One of our primary responsibilities as parliamentarians is to monitor and approve government spending.

How can we do our job if they are always playing with the numbers?

[English]

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would highly recommend the member give up his day job.

The Public Accounts of Canada are certified by the Comptroller General and the Auditor General. The facts are very clear: the funds for the Perimeter Institute are consistent with the government's commitments.

The question here remains: why has the NDP chosen to attack this world-class institution to score cheap political points, and then be

flat wrong? That member should apologize to the Comptroller General of Canada for an insulting attack.

* * *

● (1450)

G8 SUMMIT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, new documents show that the Muskoka minister used the G8 as a cover to promote a white elephant vanity project called the Summit Centre. It was sold as a dorm for the media that never came.

One email is particularly disturbing. In it the minister says:

I'm going through Treasury Board to flow funds.... I should have the money to you within three weeks. I know your credit card is maxxed!

Where is the paper trail for this vanity project? If the minister does not have the paper trail, then he is going to need to explain why he used Treasury Board as a partisan cash machine.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it will not come as any surprise to the member opposite that I do not agree with the premise of his question.

The government funded 32 public infrastructure projects. All 32 projects had contribution agreements. All 32 projects came in on or under budget. All the documentation was presented to the Auditor General. She has given some good advice on what we can do to be even more transparent and more accountable to Parliament. We completely agree with her wise counsel.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know it is Halloween, but the member does not look dressed up at all, like the beleaguered President of the Treasury Board.

I will go back to the President of the Treasury Board who, on day 144, showed up to work today dressed as the invisible man.

This project did not come in under budget. The government dinged the town for an extra \$9 million.

My colleague from foreign affairs keeps saying this was an arm's-length project. There was nothing arm's-length about it: the minister was up to his neck in pork-barrel partisan politics.

Will the minister explain why he was using Treasury Board to get money for a bogus project like this, which had no justification or paper trail? Where is the paper trail?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this project, like the other 31 projects, had a full contribution agreement that was drafted by officials at Treasury Board. This project is a public infrastructure project that will benefit the people of that municipality for many years to come.

We look forward to having the opportunity to answer even more of the member opposite's questions at committee in short order.

* * *

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's tourism market share continues to plunge. We have dropped from seventh to fifteenth in international tourism visits.

The government's failed tourism policies are costing Canada's economy and small businesses thousands of jobs and billions of dollars each year. The government's solution is to treat air travel as a cash cow, slap visitor visas on our most dynamic markets and increase EI payroll taxes. The government's so-called "strategy" is a disaster.

When will the government heed the industry's alarm bells and take action?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, the good news announced by my colleague must be seen as a positive. Businesses in the tourism industry make huge contributions to the Canadian economy and to creating jobs. We implemented Canada's federal tourism strategy to better coordinate the government's efforts, to support the tourism industry and to help Canadian tourism businesses become more competitive, seize opportunities and create jobs for Canadians, so yes, we are accomplishing things and are delivering the goods.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives sent an SOS warning to Canadian fishers when they went after the three vital S's of the fishery: safety, science and service.

They are slashing safety at sea by closing the maritime rescue sub-centres in St. John's and Quebec. They are slashing science by getting rid of the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council. Now they are slashing service by putting fishing licences out of reach for those without access to the Internet.

Will the minister commit to reversing his plan, which will hurt rural fishers who do not have access to broadband Internet, and keep the current licence application system?

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her occasional interest in fisheries issues.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House what we are not going to do. We are not going to follow the example of this member's party that made massive arbitrary cuts through the 1990s and even as recently as 2005. It cut \$50 million from the science budget.

Our government has a clear vision for a prosperous and viable future of the fishery in Canada. So fearmongering over progressive changes is not the type of—

• (1455)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one must be bilingual in order to hold the position of Auditor General of Canada. It is not just the francophones in this country who demand it; the *Canada Gazette* does as well. The job posting clearly stated, "Proficiency in both official languages is essential". The President of the Public Service Commission is right in criticizing this appointment.

Canadians want to know: was the appointment process fair or did the government once again give one of its friends preferential treatment?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely untrue. As we have already said, of course the government looked for bilingual candidates. However, upon completion of a rigorous process, the best-qualified candidate was chosen. Mr. Ferguson has said that he wants to learn French and he is already taking courses.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why the government did not advertise the job again to give all anglophones a chance to apply. This is not the first time that this government has misled Canadians.

How did a unilingual candidate get through the interview process? Was he not asked any questions in French? This is a direct affront to bilingualism.

One has to wonder: did the government or someone in the government suggest that Michael Ferguson apply for the job even though he is not bilingual?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have already said, Mr. Ferguson is a very well-qualified candidate. As we have also already said, he has already started learning French.

[English]

I would only add that he is getting rave reviews, including from the former Auditor General, Sheila Fraser, who has indicated her support for his candidacy.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's entrepreneurs are the unsung heroes of the Canadian economy, creating jobs and growth in every region of our country.

Following this month's nomination by *Forbes* magazine as the best place in the world to do business, will the Minister of Industry please tell the House how our entrepreneurs are leading all G20 countries?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, finally, an excellent question, since *Forbes* magazine did in fact give Canada high marks. There are others who agree, including Ernst & Young, which has ranked the confidence of Canadian entrepreneurs among the highest in the G20. Another report, this one from the McKinsey firm, says that Canada is the best place of any G20 nation to go into business.

These high marks all show that our government made the right decision by keeping taxes low. We will continue on the same path. We will not increase the tax burden by \$10 billion, as the NDP proposed in its campaign platform.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the bill killing the Canadian Wheat Board will be before a legislative committee starting this evening.

While the government cut off discussion, allowing only three days of debate, western grain farmers and Canadians as a whole still have a right to better understand the devastating impact of this legislation.

Will the government allow this committee to travel out west to allow access to the committee and hear from experts and farmers who will be affected by this legislation? Will the government commit to televising the proceedings so Canadians are not left out of this important process?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have not been left out of this important process. It has gone on far longer than the member knows. It went on long before he was ever involved in it.

Our government is committed to passing the marketing freedom for farmers act in a timely and orderly manner to ensure market certainty for farmers. They need market certainty for next year, and we intend to do that as quickly as possible.

This legislative committee is an ideal place to examine the bill and its technical nature.

* * *

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while Conservatives make cuts to the University of the Arctic, northerners are wondering what happened to the government's commitment to the north.

As Philip, one of many who has emailed me with these concerns, wrote: "How does the Prime Minister's commitment to Arctic sovereignty, issues of sustainable development and expansion of Canadian understanding of, and co-operation with, peoples of the North coincide with his government's slashing of funding for the University of the Arctic?"

Where is their commitment to the north? What is their answer to Philip and other northerners?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have and continue to make important and strategic investments to strengthen the economic prosperity and quality of life of northerners. The Government of Canada continues to support the University of the Arctic; however, we have also advised it that we cannot continue to be the only source of funding for this initiative.

Territorial support is crucial to its long-term sustainability and success in Canada. The territories have indicated they wish to explore other options. We respect this decision.

* * *

● (1500)

JUSTICE

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned about crime and gave our Conservative government a strong mandate to keep our streets and communities safe. That is why in the last election we promised to introduce lawful access legislation in due course.

Our approach to this issue has always struck an appropriate balance between police powers needed to protect public safety and the necessity to safeguard the privacy of Canadians. However, there have been exaggerated concerns presented by the opposition.

Could the minister tell the House what our proposed approach to the lawful access legislation will do?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear: no legislation proposed by our Conservative government will allow police to unlawfully read emails without a warrant.

As technology evolves, many criminal activities, such as the distribution of child pornography, become much easier. We are proposing measures to bring our laws into the 21st century and provide police with the tools they need to do their job.

Rather than making things easier for child pornographers or organized crime, I call on the NDP to support these balanced measures to protect law-abiding Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP is calling on the government to stop hiding behind cabinet confidences and to respond to our access to information request by immediately making reports on the safety of the Champlain Bridge available to the public, instead of hiding them from the bridge's users. Every day, 200,000 people cross that bridge, and they have a right to know about its condition.

Will the government finally reveal the information that the cabinet members share freely among themselves, but refuse to share with Canadians?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the NDP was truly worried about the safety of the Champlain Bridge, it should have voted in favour of our budgets that invested in maintenance for the bridge in 2009. We are doing the work needed to ensure the structure's safety. While the NDP's priority is to scare Canadians, we are looking towards the future with the construction of a new bridge over the St. Lawrence. I therefore invite the hon. member to support us when it comes to replacing the old bridge with a new one.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives misled Quebec regarding the extension of the mission in Afghanistan. The Prime Minister stated last year that there would be minimal risks and that training would take place “on military bases and in classrooms”. Today he said that the mission involves significant risks.

Does this not give us reason to believe that the Prime Minister was not truthful with Quebecers? Will the government acknowledge that it gave false information about the actual risks and that consequently it must put an end to the military mission?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is false. The Prime Minister provided accurate and correct information. It is true that this mission involves significant risks.

[English]

This is the reason we continue to support our men and women in uniform with appropriate equipment to protect them, to support them in every way we can. We have nothing but the highest regard, admiration, and respect for the men and women in uniform, and their families, for what they do for our country at home and abroad.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, 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 delegation of the Canada–Europe Parliamentary Association, respecting its participation in the 34th annual interparliamentary meeting with the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with Canada and the parliamentary mission to Denmark, the next country to hold the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, held in Strasbourg, France and Copenhagen, Denmark, September 10 to 17, 2011.

• (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs is rising on a point of order.

Routine Proceedings

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to correct the record. In an answer to a question from the New Democrats, I said contribution agreements were drafted by Treasury Board. Of course, they were drafted by Infrastructure Canada. I regret any false impression I may have left.

The Speaker: I am sure the House appreciates that clarification.

* * *

PETITIONS

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to present a petition signed by literally thousands of Canadians from all across Canada who call upon Parliament to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known. The petitioners point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial causes combined. They also remind Parliament that Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world and spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry and curbing international efforts to curb its use.

Therefore, these petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to ban asbestos in all of its forms and institute a just transition program for asbestos workers and the communities they live in. They call upon government to end all subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad, and to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

CHILD ABDUCTION AND KIDNAPPING REGISTRY

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured to present a petition on behalf of 5,600 constituents from coast to coast. It calls for a national child abduction and kidnapping registry, informing communities of high-risk offenders. It calls for protocols to nationalize the AMBER Alert program, and to introduce a three tiered classification system for child abduction and kidnapping laws, similar to the Adam Walsh child protection and safety act, passed on July 27, 2006, as the United States federal statute reflects.

It is imperative that we take care of our children in this country and that our communities understand what we will do for them. I present this on behalf of all of them.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from people from all over Ontario who are concerned with the proposed mega-quarry in Melancthon Township in Dufferin County, which would be the largest open-pit quarry in Canada at over 2,300 acres.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are concerned about a number of things, one of which is that the proposed mega-quarry would remove from production some of Ontario's best farmland. They are asking that the Government of Canada conduct an environmental assessment under the authority of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act on the Highland Companies' proposed mega-quarry development.

IRAN

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present a petition signed by prominent leaders in the Iranian Canadian community. A similar petition has been signed by thousands of human rights advocates, particularly from the Iranian community in Canada.

The petitioners are bringing the case of Mr. Khavari to Parliament's attention. Mr. Khavari, a dual Iranian-Canadian citizen and former chairman of Iran's largest bank, is wanted for questioning in Tehran. During the time he reportedly obtained his Canadian citizenship, Mr. Khavari led a financial institution belonging to the Iranian revolutionary guards, a known international sponsor of terrorism and the source of much of the violence against civilians during Iran's post-election protests.

The petitioners are requesting that the government investigate the conditions of Mr. Khavari's citizenship to see whether he obtained it by meeting all the legal requirements. This is a growing problem that the Iranian Canadian community is raising with the government. Just today, we read that a second Iranian banker has settled in Montreal. These individuals are associated with the Iranian regime, even if they find themselves on the wrong side of the regime today.

Many Iranian Canadians contacting my office argue that Canada should not be a safe haven for these individuals. It is a slap in the face of so many of the people who have moved to Canada to avoid the torture and violence of this regime.

• (1510)

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by a number of citizens across west central Saskatchewan. They are expressing concern about their fellow Canadians who suffer from both CCSVI, which is chronic cerebral spinal venous insufficiency, and multiple sclerosis. They point out that the unfortunate occurrence of both of those serious diseases can often result in particular treatment being denied with respect to CCSVI.

The petitioners call upon the Minister of Health to consult more broadly and thoroughly with experts in Canada and around the world who actually have direct experience with the treatment of CCSVI. They urge the Minister of Health to proceed with phase 3 clinical trials on an urgent basis and to provide assistance to follow up on the experience of these patients over time so that Canada can develop the information base that is necessary to ensure that CCSVI is properly treated in Canada with the new technology that is available.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the first of thousands of petitions asking to end the patently unfair taxpayer subsidy of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Canadians from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario all want to end the \$1,160,000,000 taxpayer subsidization of the CBC.

Rural Canadians from Innisfail, Alberta; Chemainus, British Columbia; Waldheim, Saskatchewan; and Exeter, Ontario, are calling for an end to the \$1 billion public subsidy of the state broadcaster.

When we live in a 1,000-channel universe, why spend over \$1 billion on a state broadcaster like the CBC?

KIDNEY DISEASE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to present two petitions.

The first petition contains many pages of petitioners from Peterborough who want to draw attention to kidney disease, a huge and growing problem in Canada.

While real progress is being made in a variety of ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, the petitioners also call upon Parliament to make research funding available to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension of the research that is being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States.

KURDISTAN

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition comes from Vancouver and is signed by members of the Kurdish community and other concerned Canadian citizens who want to draw attention to the serious violations of human rights by the Kurdistan regional government, KRG, in the northern part of Iraq, Kurdistan.

The petitioners point out that activists, journalists, academics, members of the opposition, political parties and ordinary citizens who have been participating in demonstrations and assemblies are often arrested, tortured and killed. Kurdish towns and cities have been militarized and further opposition has been crushed.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada and all of us to condemn these violations against the demonstrators by the KRG in the northern part of Iraq, Kurdistan.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions. The first petition is with respect to a matter that has already been brought before us about a particularly compelling matter.

The first petition is from a group of Iranian Canadians who wish to bring to the attention of the House the concerns they have with regard to Mahmoud-Reza Khavari, a former managing director and chairman of the board of the largest state-owned Iranian financial institution, the Melli Bank. He was also director on the board of another principal state-owned entity, the Sepah Bank.

Routine Proceedings

Of particular concern is Mr. Khavari's alleged settling here in Canada. These two banks, with which Mr. Khavari has been intimately associated, are state-owned entities that have been blacklisted by the United States, the European Union and the United Nations for having assisted Iran, both with respect to its nuclear weaponization program and with respect to its financing of terrorist activities, thereby threatening international peace and security.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to recognize the grave concern that Mr. Khavari poses in this regard to peace and security in general. They ask that the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism look into the situation with respect to the acquisition of citizenship and permanent residence, and whether these were acquired by fraud, misrepresentation or any form of concealed material circumstances.

• (1515)

[Translation]

FALUN GONG

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition to condemn the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China and, in particular, to save members of Canadian families. According to the petitioners, Falun Gong is a beneficial and peaceful spiritual practice based on the principles of truth, compassion and tolerance. In addition, the petitioners claim that in July 2000, China's Communist Party launched a campaign to eradicate Falun Gong, and that 12 members of Canadian families are serving sentences of up to 12 years simply for believing in Falun Gong.

The petitioners are calling on the Canadian government to publicly condemn China's Communist regime for its illegal persecution of Falun Gong practitioners and to save the members of Canadian families mentioned, who are incarcerated in China simply for believing in Falun Gong.

[English]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure today to present a large number of petitions from Canadians from coast to coast.

The petitioners call upon the government to de-fund the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. They would particularly like to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Government of Canada funds the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to the sum of \$1.1 billion per year and that the vast amount of the Government of Canada funding gives the CBC an unfair advantage over its private sector competitors.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to end the public funding of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present a petition on a subject that has already been touched upon in the House today and that is the treatment by the government of the People's Republic of China of the Falun Gong, a very peaceful and spiritual group of people who are

exercising their right to pursue their principles of truth, compassion and forbearance.

It is reported that more than 3,448 practitioners have been tortured to death in the People's Republic of China. It is certainly the case that the UN special rapporteur on torture has reported many victims of alleged torture and ill treatment in China as Falun Gong practitioners. There, apparently, are 12 people in forced labour camps in the People's Republic of China who have close family ties to Canadian Chinese citizens. Any free and democratic nation has the responsibility to condemn crimes against humanity wherever they occur.

The petitioners call upon the Canadian government to use every channel possible to call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong, especially when it meets with top Chinese leaders at international forums, and also to help rescue the family members of Canadian residents who are incarcerated because of their belief in Falun Gong.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 129 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 129—**Mr. Don Davies:**

With regard to visa holders, for each of the fiscal years from 2001-2002 to 2010-2011, expressed as both a raw number and a percentage of total visas issued, what is the total number of instances of visa holders overstaying the length of their temporary residence visa, (i) in total, (ii) broken down by country of origin of the visa holder, (iii) broken down by issuing visa office?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the CBSA does not collect this type of information.

The CBSA is mandated to ensure the safety and security of Canada's population by taking appropriate enforcement action against individuals who are non-compliant with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, including investigations, arrests, detentions and removals. In support of its mandate, the CBSA makes use of referrals from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, police, and tips from the public to investigate cases of possible non-compliance.

The CBSA does not proactively monitor foreign nationals who have been authorized to work in Canada. Until such time as Canada has a system in place for exit controls, it is difficult for the CBSA to establish whether foreign nationals authorized to work in Canada have complied with all conditions imposed or have remained in Canada beyond the period of time authorized for their stay.

* * *

[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. 132 and 138 could be made orders for return, these would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Business of Supply

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 132—**Ms. Megan Leslie:**

With regard to Environment Canada and the oil and gas sector in Canada: (a) what does Environment Canada's economic modelling show about the effect of a carbon price on natural gas consumption in Canada, relative to business as usual; (b) has Environment Canada performed any assessment or updating of its methane emission factors for natural gas extraction, processing, transmission and distribution, and what is the source of the emission factors it is currently using; (c) has Environment Canada performed any analysis on whether to include oil and gas wells in the National Pollutant Release Inventory such that the composition and volume of fracking fluids would be publicly reported; (d) what recent analysis has Environment Canada performed concerning the structure and use of groundwater resources in Canada; (e) what analysis, if any, has Environment Canada performed concerning the effect of natural gas prices on potential shale gas expansion; (f) what analysis has Environment Canada done concerning the cumulative impacts of natural gas development on Canada's natural environment; (g) what analysis has Environment Canada done concerning the cost per tonne of carbon capture and storage for natural gas processing plants; (h) what analysis has Environment Canada done of changes to disclosure rules concerning gas development in other jurisdictions, and what is Environment Canada's position on those proposals; (i) what analysis has Environment Canada done of "pauses" or moratoria on gas development in other jurisdictions, and what is Environment Canada's position on those proposals; and (j) what analysis, if any, has Environment Canada done on the role of switching to natural gas in reaching Canada's 2020 greenhouse gas emission target?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 138—**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:**

With regard to the constitutional provision that each of the 24 Senators appointed to represent the province of Quebec "shall be appointed for One of the Twenty-four Electoral Divisions of Lower Canada specified in Schedule A to Chapter One of the Consolidated Statutes of Canada", what is: (a) the total population of each of these 24 electoral divisions; (b) the geographic size in square kilometres of each of these 24 divisions; (c) the name and population of the largest urban centre in each of these divisions; and (d) the population, geographic size in square kilometres, and name and population of the largest urban centre of the area in the province of Quebec that is not covered by any division?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ASBESTOS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles has only three minutes remaining for her speech.

• (1520)

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the Rotterdam listings are determined by consensus, and if some countries object, the potentially hazardous substance may not be listed. Canada thus

has a negative impact on the effectiveness of the list by being an obstacle to it, when the list advocates better international health through better control over exports of toxic substances. The NDP would like to urge that asbestos be included in the Rotterdam Convention list, which will force exporters like Canada to warn importing countries of any health risk. Those countries could then refuse to import asbestos if they did not think they could handle the product safely.

As well, a motion like this one today does not mean that we have to abandon the asbestos mine workers. On the contrary, support from the federal government is essential to assist the workers affected, who have given their time, effort and health to this ailing industry. The government must also implement urgent measures to revitalize the economy in these entire regions, which have already suffered for too long.

The NDP is suggesting concrete actions that will enable these workers to re-enter the labour market and other measures for older workers that will protect their well-being and their retirement. We all know that when a mine closes in a single-industry town, the entire community feels the effects. It is not just the mine that closes; the small business that provides goods and services to the mine also closes, along with businesses in the municipality, such as car dealerships, grocery stores, travel agencies, and so on.

No jobs, no goods and services consumed. To counteract those effects and protect the people living in the regions affected, the NDP recommends that the workers and communities affected be consulted and investments be made in the economic development of the communities affected by the mine closure. For workers approaching retirement, it recommends that a transitional period be provided to allow them to end their careers with dignity and that an early retirement benefit be implemented. For younger workers, it proposes that training measures and labour market re-entry measures be implemented. That is the fair and long-term solution proposed by the NDP, a solution that respects families, the economy, the health of our fellow Canadians, and also our international reputation, which must be allowed to shine again.

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it very odd to hear a speech like that. In 2006, the Quebec section of the NDP proposed, at the party's policy convention in Quebec City, and I quote: "that the [NDP] vote in favour of the safe production and responsible use of chrysotile." Can the hon. member on the other side of the House tell us whether those Quebec members support the real people on the ground, the ones who created the safe use policy, or the elites that run the NDP's party machine?

I would also like to know how she explains the fact that the member for Outremont participated in a unanimous resolution of the National Assembly in 2004 objecting to the inclusion of chrysotile in the Rotterdam list, when he has now done a complete about-face. How can these mutually exclusive positions, to say the least, be explained? The chrysotile workers' union is doing a lot of lobbying and bringing pressure to bear to show that chrysotile can be used safely and that it has been the most widely used mineral in the world. And yet what is now being advocated is that we move toward substitutes, although there are no data about their safety.

Business of Supply

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, among the 10,918 workers in the asbestos mines and mills in Quebec and in an asbestos products plant whose mortality was studied up to 1992, there were 38 deaths from mesothelioma. A few years later, between 1988 and 2003, 59 cases of mesothelioma were recognized as occupational pulmonary diseases in workers at the asbestos mines and mills in Quebec. Forty-three of them had died between 1993 and 2003 and they were born after the people who were included in the 10,918 workers, thus doubling the number of mesothelioma cases reported in this industry. As well, between 1988 and 2003, there were 198 cases of asbestosis and 203 cases of lung cancer in addition to the mesothelioma cases. That is why we have to ban sending these products to developing countries, where people do not know how to use them properly.

• (1525)

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the part of the motion that talks about support for workers and the industry.

Would it not be possible for the government to stop subsidizing and paying for trade delegations that go to other countries to promote asbestos? Would it not be possible for the government to stop spending hundreds of thousands of dollars a year on the asbestos industry? Would it not be possible for the government to take all that money and invest it in a fund? That way, first, we could diversify the Canadian economy, something we often hear about from the other side, the government side, and second, it could also help the workers so they do not find themselves with no money when asbestos stops being produced and exported.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her question.

NDP MPs met with asbestos workers in early September. For now, it is the older workers who remain. There are roughly 300 or 400 jobs in the asbestos industry at present. What these workers want is an honourable transition for the time they have left before retirement. There are very few young people and some workers are even being redirected to other jobs, in the commercial sector for example. Between 25% and 30% of the population already works outside Thetford Mines and Asbestos.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in this House and defend this important issue for the province and regions of Quebec. Canada has been promoting the safe use of chrysotile asbestos at home and abroad for more than 30 years. That is why I would once again like to express our government's support for the asbestos-producing regions.

Canada monitors the use of chrysotile and promotes its safe use around the world. Canada does not ban the mining of naturally occurring substances. Natural resources are the driver of Canada's economic success. Banning the mining of any naturally occurring substance would have an adverse effect on the entire natural resources sector. During the last election campaign, our government

said it would not ban a natural resource that is traded around the world.

This government will not place a Canadian industry in a position where it would be subject to negative discrimination in a market where the sale is permitted. Canada's production for export is worth almost \$100 million, or approximately 10% of global production. Our government is aware of the importance of this industry in Quebec. I would also like to mention our government's efforts to diversify regional economies. For example, there is the strong support for the SADCs in Les Sources and Thetford Mines, which have worked tirelessly on the economic diversification of these regions.

Efforts in this regard include, among others, the gas pipeline between Vallée-Jonction and Thetford Mines, an important project that was recently announced in the presence of the Prime Minister. With this investment of more than \$18 million, the government is making possible the construction of a \$24 million pipeline that will provide access to a reliable and less costly source of energy, natural gas. The project will contribute to the economic development and diversification of the region and surrounding communities. This contribution by the Government of Canada is an exceptional measure for the economic diversification of this region.

I am also thinking of the \$474,000 in funding provided to set up and run two research centres in Thetford Mines, which are the pride of the business community in the region. The Centre de technologie minérale et de plasturgie received \$170,000 in 2007 and provides professional expertise in plastics and mineral technology.

Having said that, in Canada, exposure to chrysotile is strictly controlled by maximum exposure limits in workplaces issued by federal, provincial and territorial government and by restrictions on certain categories of consumer products and products in the workplace under Canada's Hazardous Products Act.

Importing countries are solely responsible for their decision to import products, such as chrysotile, and implementing appropriate measures to ensure the health and safety of their workers. We implemented measures to protect the health and safety of those working in the mining sector, especially workers who handle chrysotile, a long time ago.

Our knowledge in this area is constantly growing, just like our knowledge of many other products that can pose a risk or danger when we are not very familiar with their attributes. For many decades now, we have been making a distinction between amphibole and chrysotile, and we have implemented regulatory mechanisms to protect workers in this sector.

Business of Supply

The illnesses that we are currently seeing in countries that have made heavy use of asbestos fibres are related to exposure to high doses in the past and inappropriate practices that were prohibited and abandoned in Canada in the late 1970s. Completely banning chrysotile is not necessary or appropriate because doing so will not protect workers or the public from past uses that have been prohibited for many years now. Since 1988, all federal, provincial and territorial regulations on health and safety in Canada that pertain directly or indirectly to working with or around asbestos are consistent with the International Labour Organization's 1986 Convention concerning Safety in the Use of Asbestos, Convention 162.

● (1530)

Canada was one of the leaders in the development of this convention.

Importing nations alone are responsible for their decisions related to the import of products, including chrysotile, and for the implementation of measures to ensure the health and safety of their workers. However, we strongly encourage importing nations to put mechanisms in place to ensure the controlled use of chrysotile and products containing chrysotile.

Once again, since this point bears repeating, in Canada, exposure to chrysotile is strictly controlled by workplace exposure limits.

These limits are set by the federal, provincial and territorial governments. Exposure is also controlled by banning certain categories of consumer products and products in the workplace under Canada's Hazardous Products Act.

The purpose of these regulations is to prevent consumers from being exposed to products containing asbestos, the fibres of which can detach, be inhaled and thus be harmful to health.

It is important to note that the development of natural resources is an area of provincial jurisdiction. Prohibiting the mining of a natural resource would infringe on provincial jurisdiction.

Our government has always had great respect for provincial jurisdictions. With that in mind, I find this motion troubling, since it was moved by the NDP, a party that claims to defend Quebec's interests. This is clearly not the case, especially when we consider the fact that the Government of Quebec supports the chrysotile industry.

If my colleagues do not believe me, they should listen to the following quotes from Premier Jean Charest:

"The government has not changed its mind. It will continue to defend the safe use of chrysotile, a policy that should be defended." That quote was from April 12, 2010.

"Quebec promotes the safe use of chrysotile. That is what we do at home and that is what is encouraged throughout the world." That was Premier Jean Charest on January 29, 2010.

I have to wonder why the NDP is seeking to punish Quebec instead of rising to defend the people who voted for it. What is worse is that the NDP must be aware that this topic is very important in Quebec.

If that is not aware, that means it is ignoring its own members from Quebec. For example, in 2006, at the NDP's convention in Quebec City, the NDP's Quebec section proposed that the NDP vote in favour of the safe production and responsible use of chrysotile. This was resolution 4J3. In the same resolution, the Quebec section of the NDP even recognized that chrysotile could be used safely.

Will the Quebeckers on the other side of the House tell us whether they support the people from the regions or the elites who run the NDP's political machine? I wonder, because they obviously cannot support both sides at the same time.

In 1984, the Government of Canada got together with the Government of Quebec, the industry and labour unions associated with the Canadian chrysotile industry to create the Chrysotile Institute. The governments recognized the need to promote the controlled use of chrysotile through health and safety training programs, technology transfers and information sessions. These initiatives generated a lot of interest, both from producers and from countries that use chrysotile.

The Chrysotile Institute has carried out research and provided information and training workshops on dust control for unions and workers since its creation. It has also provided training programs for medical monitoring and contributed to the transfer of knowledge and technology to more than 60 countries.

The institute has fostered the development and implementation of regulations and best practices throughout the world. These initiatives have helped developing countries adopt workplace health and safety practices in accordance with the requirements of the International Labour Organization's Convention No.162 concerning safety in the use of asbestos.

● (1535)

In February 2008, the Government of Canada confirmed \$250,000 in funding over three years for the Chrysotile Institute to carry out its mandate. The agreement between the Government of Canada and the institute is still in effect, under the same terms, and will end on March 31, 2012.

Through our partnership with the Chrysotile Institute we inform the public of the technical means, control measures, standards and best practices for the production and handling of chrysotile fibre.

Over the years, this same partnership has facilitated the global transfer of know-how and technology, which strengthens our economy.

In this regard, I would like to reiterate that we have always emphasized economic growth and job creation for Canadians. I know that we can be proud of the 656,000 new jobs that have been created since the depths of the recession in July 2009, the best job growth in the G7. We can also celebrate the fact that our unemployment rate is steadily decreasing and has now reached 7.1%, the lowest rate since December 2008.

Business of Supply

Through our world-class economic action plan, which the NDP opposed, we have established partnerships with the provinces to provide training and financial assistance to affected workers in order to keep them in the job market.

With respect to work-sharing agreements with employers, labour market agreements and labour market development agreements with the provinces, and with excellent funding by our economic action plan, our government provided close to \$3.5 billion to Quebec in skills and employment funding. This is a whole series of economic measures that the NDP has opposed.

The work-sharing program was developed to help companies that were experiencing temporary slowdowns to avoid layoffs while they got back on their feet by providing income support in the form of employment insurance to workers whose number of hours of work per week had been reduced. Employers are able to keep their employees and avoid the costs of having to rehire and retrain, while employees are able to continue working and keep their skills up to date. Workers who are laid off at the end of the work-sharing agreement are entitled to regular employment insurance benefits based on their rate of pay prior to their participation in the work-sharing program.

As of October 16, 2011, there were 5,774 workers participating in 145 active work-sharing agreements in Quebec. Sometimes, however, individuals have to transition to a new career in order to continue working.

Although the federal government recognizes that the provinces and territories are responsible for designing and carrying out labour market programs, it is providing a great deal of support to Quebec to help Quebecers get the training they need to find employment. Since 2008-09, the government has provided Quebec with over \$3.5 billion in funding related to skills and employment. This includes close to \$360 million under the economic action plan to help Quebecers affected by the economic slowdown to upgrade their skills and retrain.

This year alone, Quebec will receive over \$750 million in funding for its skills and employment priorities. These significant investments were recognized by Quebec when the province announced its *Pacte pour l'emploi*.

The 2007 budget established the foundation for this new labour market architecture, which provides a labour market program for those who need it, while encouraging employers to provide more training. This new architecture also clarifies roles and responsibilities by recognizing that the provinces and territories are in the best position to develop and implement labour market training.

This was done through bilateral agreements called labour market agreements, which are supported by an annual federal investment worth \$500 million paid to the provinces and territories on an equal per capita basis.

These agreements were created in order to fill the gap in labour market programs concerning those who do not currently qualify for training under the employment insurance program and in order to encourage employers to provide more training for their employees.

The provinces and territories, including Quebec, have the primary responsibility for developing and implementing programs, thereby offering greater flexibility in understanding and meeting the particular needs of local and regional labour markets.

● (1540)

As part of our economic action plan, which the NDP did not support, thereby jeopardizing our economic recovery, the federal government invested more money in labour market development agreements through the strategic training and transition fund. This fund was created in order to target the specific needs of individuals affected by the economic downturn, regardless of whether they qualified for employment insurance. The fund allowed the provinces and territories greater flexibility in order to target local and regional labour market realities. This helped to ensure that all Canadians would have access to the training and assistance they need to get back to work.

The strategic training and transition fund provided \$55 million over two years and was administered through existing labour market development agreements in Quebec. Labour market development agreements exist above and beyond labour market development agreements—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île on a point of order.

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to remind the hon. member that today the debate is on the asbestos industry and not on the government's economic action plan. I have been listening since the beginning of his speech, and the first two or three minutes were on today's debate on asbestos. However, for the past five or six minutes, I have heard him talk about the government's economic action plan and the 650,000 jobs that have been created. This has nothing to do with the debate we are having today in this House on the asbestos industry.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): We have had several points of order raised today during the debate on relevance. I will reiterate the point that I made earlier this morning.

There is a matter before the House and there is a Standing Order that requires members to address that issue. It is the practice of the House that members are given a significant amount of latitude in terms of their remarks, whether they want to deal with the issue narrowly or more broadly. I would ask for the co-operation of all members in that regard.

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to resume debate. This is a question that the hon. member asked her own colleague earlier. It is an explanation to which she should take the time to listen. It would be to her advantage.

Business of Supply

Labour market agreements exist above and beyond labour market development agreements, which help workers who currently qualify for employment insurance benefits to gain more skills and obtain more training. Paid for through employment insurance premiums, labour market development agreements allow individuals who have recently lost their jobs through no fault of their own to access training in order to make it easier for them to transition to another career.

Canada is currently investing close to \$2 billion a year in the provinces and territories by way of this system. Since 2008, Quebec has received \$2.4 billion through labour market development agreements to help its workers. What does this mean for Quebec workers? In the 2009-10 fiscal year, 205,411 people took advantage of the services offered by these programs, which provided 62,015 interventions pertaining to employment-related benefits and 173,297 interventions pertaining to employment assistance services. Clearly, our government, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, has made a significant investment to help unemployed workers get the training they need to transition to new careers.

As a result, and in conclusion, we reject the premise of the opposition's motion, which seeks to cast aspersions on one of Quebec's long-standing natural resource industries. We also reject the opposition's argument that separate funding is key to helping our workers transition to another industry since our government has already provided for the assistance necessary to help workers who wish to transition to another career should they feel the need to do so.

• (1545)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during question period, the Minister of Industry said that exporting natural resources was a provincial responsibility, which is absolutely false. The export of Canadian minerals is the federal government's responsibility.

What is more, the Minister of Industry compared nickel mines, where I worked for 34 years, to asbestos mines. There are a lot of nickel mines in my riding. If the Minister of Industry is not familiar with the difference between asbestos mines and nickel mines, then I invite him to come to Nickel Belt. We will show him the difference between an asbestos mine and a nickel mine.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for that question. I would like to reiterate that Canada has been promoting the safe and controlled use of chrysotile at home and abroad for 30 years. If the hon. member wants to stand up for the Canadian mining sector, then he should just vote against his party's motion.

[English]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the NDP member who brought forward the point of order noted, the parliamentary secretary spoke very little of substance toward the motion and much of his speech was on other issues, promoting his government in areas that really were not associated whatsoever with the motion.

This makes one conclude that possibly the parliamentary secretary is not personally very proud or supportive of the government's position on this issue. He certainly did not have very many words to

develop an argument for why he supported the government's position.

I have a specific question about section (b) of the motion. The parliamentary secretary talked about demonizing an industry. In fact, the motion also asks that the government "support international efforts to add...asbestos to the list of hazardous chemical products under the Rotterdam Convention". India, an exporter and importer, supported the Rotterdam Convention.

Could the parliamentary secretary explain why the government would not add its voice to something of which even India is in support?

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, adding chrysotile to the list was debated during meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention in 2011, 2008 and 2006. All three times, the parties postponed the decision to their next meeting for lack of consensus. The hon. member's party was in power at the time. There are still former health ministers and natural resource ministers here. I would like the hon. member to tell us how her party plans to vote to stand up for Canada's mining resources.

• (1550)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, after question period and the intervention by the member for Nickel Belt, there remains a great deal of confusion. First, during question period, I said that natural resource development, and not exports, is the jurisdiction of the provinces. Second, the member knows very well that there is international pressure on the nickel industry to ban this metal. That is what I wanted to say.

The NDP is going after chrysotile; what will be next? Will it be uranium, the oil sands, all the country's natural resources? The NDP has absolutely no credibility. I would even say that the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, who talked about the workers, is out of sync with them. The workers established a policy on the safe use of chrysotile, they supported it, they developed it.

I know that my colleague has an email from Luc Lachance, the union president, in his hands. What does he have to say?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to personally congratulate my colleague, the minister, who does an excellent job standing up for the people in his region. I do have an email from Luc Lachance, president of the steelworkers union at LAB Chrysotile. It was sent to the opposition party and says:

It is utterly appalling and unacceptable that you support banning chrysotile in Canada. In addition to the loss of approximately 1,000 direct and indirect jobs, you are preventing the Canadian industry from sharing its expertise with the rest of the world. In addition, when you manage to shut down chrysotile mining in Canada and the export of this supposedly hazardous product to other countries, I promise you that I will be there to stop the import, export and production of all other hazardous goods...

This email was sent directly by the union to the opposition party, the NDP.

Business of Supply

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech given by my colleague across the floor. I was particularly interested to hear him say that the countries that import chrysotile are solely responsible for implementing appropriate measures to ensure the health and safety of their workers. I would remind my colleague that, at this time, we export chrysotile asbestos primarily to developing countries. Furthermore, at the international summit in Geneva, Canada was the only country to oppose adding chrysotile asbestos to the list of hazardous products under the Rotterdam Convention. Even India, which currently exports chrysotile asbestos, agreed that it should be put on the list.

In the opinion of the member opposite, why does this government insist on being the odd man out and refuse to join with the other nations in banning this dangerous substance?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, at the risk of repeating myself, for the past 30 years, Canada has been promoting the safe and controlled use of chrysotile, as well as the same standards both in Canada and abroad.

[*English*]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the parliamentary secretary think that what the NDP is trying to do is shut down the natural resource industry in Canada? I know the member for Nickel Belt is sensitive to this. However, if we look at the NDP record from the last Parliament, that party brought forward not one but two bills that would essentially eliminate the natural resource industry from competition, first, on the ability of mining companies to base themselves in Canada and, second, on the environmental regulations which were so stringent they would shut down the industry.

I wonder if the member could comment on what he thinks the NDP's motive is in the big picture.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question that highlights the official opposition's conflicting positions regarding the Canadian mining industry. I would like that party to take a clear position. When it is organizing conventions, it supports the mining industry, but here in the House, it takes the opposite position. More consistency on the part of the opposition would be nice. The Canadian mining industry is an important economic sector. It is the driving force of our country's economy and we will proudly defend it.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the member is thinking about the victims. There are millions of victims who face health problems and death. Asbestos can be compared to Agent Orange. The member may laugh, but I would like to know what he will tell the victims who do not have access to a health care system that can adequately treat their illness. Is the government prepared to invest so that they have access to a health care system and can go to another country to receive care?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I am proud of Canada's health care system, which is one of the best systems in the world and which the government is maintaining along with the provinces. I hope that the members opposite are not challenging Canada's health care

system, which is one of the best in the world. I would like the member to apologize.

[*English*]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Newton—North Delta.

Before I get into my speech, today is Halloween. Yesterday when I left home I talked to two of my children and asked them to let mom or grandma inspect any candy they bring home today before eating it. I urge all parents to check the candies that the goblins bring home and make sure it is safe before they allow their children to eat it. I also urge all Canadians to take care when driving tonight and to watch for the young goblins and trick-or-treaters.

Today I rise to speak to the NDP's motion on asbestos. The NDP has long called for an end to asbestos exports to third world countries. The motion calls for a ban on the use and export of all forms of asbestos and a just transition plan for asbestos-producing workers and communities.

The motion would ensure that older asbestos workers have a decent standard of living through their retirement. It also calls for an investment fund to support diversification of the economy in the asbestos-producing regions.

On my first day in the House, I arrived here with Conservative members, Liberal members and my NDP colleagues on one of the green buses that circulate on Parliament Hill. As soon as we entered the grounds, I noticed one of the buildings was covered in a building envelope. I asked my colleagues what was going on with the building. A number of them replied. Not only my NDP colleagues but also my Conservative colleagues offered insight into what was going on with the building.

The Parliament buildings have been undergoing extensive renovations over the years. Millions of dollars have been spent to renovate these buildings. When I asked my colleagues why the buildings were being renovated, they said it was to get rid of the asbestos which is a carcinogen and is harmful. They also said that asbestos is not used in Canada anymore because the product is bad and there are concerns. It was good to hear that I would be working in a healthy workplace and that I would not be exposed to harmful substances or materials on the Hill. It was helpful to find out that this product was being removed from the Parliament buildings.

I did some research after that. There are school buildings and other public buildings that have been cleaned. There are many projects where asbestos is being removed from buildings. Why is that? The facts indicate that it is a harmful product, but my Conservative colleagues do not believe in facts nor do they rely on any kind of science. Asbestos has been shown to be harmful. That is why it is being removed from the Parliament buildings, schools and other buildings across the country.

Business of Supply

Asbestos is a product which has been proven to be harmful. It is a carcinogen. It causes disease. Many years ago the government took steps to ban its general use in buildings, and rightfully so. The million dollar question is, why are the Conservatives so bent on exporting it to third world countries? Why do they want to export death to the unsuspecting workers and the public in other countries?

• (1600)

I have been sitting here since this morning and I have not heard a satisfactory response. The Conservatives will tell us a lot of other stuff, which I will talk about.

Canada is the only developed country that exports asbestos to other countries. In fact, most of the European Union, over 50 countries, have banned the use of asbestos. Most of the developed world has banned the use of asbestos. What do we do? We export this product which is known to be harmful, which causes cancer, which kills people. I have seen emails from people who say that it sucks the life out of people. Yet we export tonnes and tonnes to third world countries where not only are workers exposed to it, but who knows where this material ends up. The general public in those countries may be exposed to asbestos as well.

Generally speaking, the workers do not have any training on its, as the Conservatives would say, safe controlled use. In fact, no studies have been done to show that asbestos can be used in a safe and controlled manner. That type of use is not supported by facts. My friends across the aisle, the Conservatives, would have us believe, and will say over and over again, that asbestos can be used in a safe and controlled manner. I think the Canadian public knows better. Canadians know when someone is not stating the facts. I have been sitting here this morning and the Conservatives keep saying that, but it is absolutely not true.

There are many concerns regarding health and safety. Asbestos has been banned in Canada. It is used on a limited basis in certain products. It was interesting to read about what asbestos does. All asbestos materials break down into fibres so tiny they cannot be seen. People would not know whether they are breathing in asbestos. All of it breaks down into tiny particles which people cannot see with their eyes. In places where asbestos is present people could breathe it in and contract a disease that could eventually kill them.

There are various estimates as to how many people are killed by asbestos material. The World Health Organization estimates that anywhere from 90,000 to 100,000 people die each year from this particular disease.

The Conservatives will claim that chrysotile asbestos is safe if it is used in a controlled manner. That is not supported by facts. The Conservatives will also tell us that the mining industry is a provincial jurisdiction. However, exports are governed by the federal government, so we can certainly ban the export of this material, the export of death to third world countries. This is a matter of human rights. We want to ensure Canada's reputation is kept intact and that we remain leaders in safeguarding the health not only of Canadians, but of citizens around the globe.

• (1605)

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member is so supportive of the mining industry,

why, in the last Parliament, did his party introduce legislation that would essentially shut down the mining industry?

That is a contradiction by the NDP and that is why Canadians are so perplexed and cynical about the NDP position. On the one hand NDP members say they want to protect the environment to the nth degree. They do not believe in the ability of remediation for mining sites or the ability to have a proper balance between resource extraction and the environment. It is really just NDP members spouting off rhetoric that has no basis in reality.

I wonder if the member could reconcile the many extremes of the NDP. It is like an octopus. NDP members have eight or nine positions on everything but stand for nothing.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, there we go again with Conservatives back to their talking points.

This material is so toxic. We know that from facts from the World Health Organization, the Canadian Cancer Society, physicians, and from all the evidence. In all credible research that has been done, asbestos was shown to be toxic, carcinogenic and it kills people.

Yet, Conservatives are also starting to realize that this material is actually toxic because I have not actually heard them use the word "asbestos". We are talking about asbestos. We are not talking about mining. They are talking about mining. We are talking about asbestos, the product that kills citizens across not only this nation but other parts of the world. We need to take a stand to protect the lives of people, not only in Canada but across the globe.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from an open letter sent to the MP for Sarnia—Lambton and I would like the hon. member to comment. The letter reads:

Only industry-funded institutions such as the Chrysotile Institute, which is a registered lobbyist for the asbestos industry, promote chrysotile asbestos and claim, against all independent evidence, that it can be safely used...In Canada, chrysotile asbestos is classified as a hazardous substance under Canadian law in order to protect Canadians. Yet the Chrysotile Institute, and unfortunately, also [the Prime Minister] refuse to allow people in the developing world this same basic human rights to be informed about a substance that can harm and kill you. This double standard, in our opinion, is morally indefensible and brings Canada into extreme disrepute internationally.

Could the member comment on that, please?

• (1610)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government spends hundreds of thousands of dollars every year on a lobby group that will lobby in different parts of the world. In fact, over the last number of years, \$50 million has been spent on the government's lobby efforts to lobby this killer product, asbestos, and to have this product sold in other third world developing countries.

With regard to having some sort of warning, the Rotterdam Convention would basically list asbestos as a hazard. There would be some sort of warning to people handling this material, or to countries that are buying it, that this material has the ability to kill and that it has the ability to cause cancer.

Business of Supply

Three times in the last five years the government has rejected that idea. That is shameful. This is not my Canada. I do not want to see my Canada export asbestos and not take a leadership role in protecting the lives of people.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are here today debating a ban on asbestos and to share the impacts that the mining and use of asbestos have on people around the globe. Being one of the largest exporters of this death trap, we have to take responsibility. I have heard my colleagues across the way say the NDP is against mining or ask what New Democrats have against the resource industry. I find that argument very disingenuous. We are here to talk about asbestos and the impact of it on human lives, so let us focus on that.

The government's argument would have us say that because I am for pharmaceutical drugs, I therefore support cocaine and heroine. That is a fallacious argument. It is using that kind of argument to stop itself from actually dealing with the debate and the issue at hand today.

I had the privilege of arriving in Canada in 1975. I was a young teacher in England. That was my first job. My second job was to teach in Quebec and I was very excited. My husband and I arrived in Thetford Mines. We were both teachers and were hired to teach there. I worked at Cégep, the high school and with seniors. I fell in love with Canada at that time. I must admit that the climate was a bit much. When the cold winter arrived, I shivered a lot, but I fell in love with the snow and started to realize that once could use it in a very effective way. I discovered snowshoeing, skiing and all of those things. However, I discovered something else as the snow started to melt.

I had heard a lot about asbestos. Remember that I am speaking about 1975. It was only as the snowbanks started to melt that I saw the layers of asbestos fibres in the snow. It caused me a great deal of concern and at that stage I remember thinking that I had to do some research because if fine fibres of asbestos were caught in snowbanks, what impact must it be having on my lungs. My husband and I decided at that stage to move from Thetford Mines, about a 45-minute drive away. We thought we were actually escaping the asbestos fibres. Lo and behold, in a little village called Kinnear's Mills, the snow came and I thought it was absolutely pristine until the spring came and the thaw began. Once again, I saw that even 45 minutes away, those fine fibres were there.

At that stage, my husband and I made the choice that we would not stay in that area because by that time we had a baby and we were concerned about the impact of asbestos. Since those days we have come a long way in Canada. We now recognize that Canada is regulated under the Hazardous Products Act. When asbestos is found in schools, it is removed immediately, and Parliament buildings are shut down so asbestos can be removed because we know that asbestos does harm.

In the same way, our workforce is also regulated, but despite all of the regulations that exist, there are still a huge number of deaths due to asbestos. The cost to the health care system is absolutely amazing. This is in a country that has many regulations. La Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail du Québec conducted a study showing that the cost of disability payments to 691 workers suffering

from an asbestos-related occupational illness exceeded \$66 million by the year 2000.

• (1615)

Here we are talking about dollars, but today through questions and other speakers, we have actually heard the real impact on families as they watched a loved one die due to asbestos, something that we can prevent and that we are trying to prevent here.

I have a question to my colleagues across the floor. Why, then, is the government not willing to sign on to the Rotterdam Convention and say that this is one of those hazardous materials? India, one of our major importers, after a few years of making the same mistake, has now seen daylight and is willing to sign on to this convention. The country that is standing in the way is Canada. The arguments we are hearing are economic arguments about mining and the money it brings in. We are not talking about the death we are exporting.

It is very easy for us to say that the countries we export to can put all kinds of regulations in place but look at the major countries we export to. We export to Indonesia, India and the Philippines. It is no secret that in India the literacy rate is still very low in many parts of the country. It is also no secret that there is very little regulation and oversight into these kinds of hazardous materials. Yet, knowing that this material causes grave harm, we are prepared to sell it.

This question comes to my mind. We all set our hair on fire whenever we hear Colombia or other countries are selling drugs that end up on our streets and do our children harm. I am one of those. I am a mother and a teacher. I care very deeply. I do not want those drugs on my streets because they are dangerous. Then why are we, a developed nation, exporting a product that is causing deaths of a similar and greater magnitude in developing countries? I ask colleagues, from all sides of the House, that we stop and think about the harm this fibre, this asbestos, is doing to men, women and children.

We are not talking about dollars here. For jobs, the NDP motion has built into it a need for us to have diversification, a need for us to invest in other greener and more healthier economies. Let us invest in our manufacturing industries. Let us look at other possibilities. Let us do a transition plan for workers who are employed in this industry right now. That is the action that we need to take. That is what responsible government is all about.

What kind of a reputation do we want to have in the world? That there is a product that we do not want to be used here, but we are willing to sell it overseas where it can have a very high death rate due to that problem, but it is not our problem because we have our dollars in our pocket.

This cannot be about dollars in the Canadian government's pockets. I know Canadians. Canadians are compassionate and caring people. They would not want to make a very minuscule profit, or even a big profit, at the expense of imposing on other countries massive deaths of men, women and children.

Business of Supply

We are all wearing our poppies today and this week we are going to be remembering the men and women who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of men, women and children in other countries. So today I appeal to the goodness in all of us in the same way.

● (1620)

Let us keep in mind that we are Canadians. If we think a product is hazardous for us, it is hazardous for others. Let us not export death.

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech attentively and in astonishment.

[English]

She said that when she was in Thetford Mines she would find asbestos in the snow and things like that. These kind of things are insulting for our community.

We are talking about the safe use of asbestos. We are not talking about the old-fashioned use of the 1950s or the 1960s or about stories like she mentioned. I do not have any dust on my coat. It is bad debate that frightens people. It is unacceptable. The safe-use policy has been developed by the workers and we now have international expertise to ensure that this stuff is used properly.

Could she guarantee us that if she comes back to Thetford Mines after so many years and finds asbestos, she will take a picture and bring it back to the House? Is this what she mentioned? This is what I understood from her speech and it is totally inappropriate.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, the stories I told of 1975 and 1976 were actual stories of what I experienced in my life. They were not made up. I did say in my speech that we had come a long way since then. However, we still know today that asbestos is dangerous, that it causes bodily harm. It is because of that we are having this debate today and asking for a ban on us exporting asbestos or, as I said earlier, death to other countries.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for recalling some of the issues around asbestos. I was in the construction industry for many years. At that time, the exposure that the average worker would have to asbestos was really quite unfortunate. No one knew any better. We know better these days.

My question, though, is about the Conservatives linking the whole mining industry in Canada with asbestos.

Would my colleague not agree that this is actually quite a dangerous strategy on the part of the government? We have an industry that is vilified around the world, and that is the asbestos industry. We have a Canadian mining industry that has huge investments around the world, a Canadian mining industry that for future investments will be judged on its Canadian attitude, Canadian performance, the type of direction that it takes the whole industry. If we tie the mining of asbestos to our major mining industry, as the Conservatives are trying to do today, is that not actually a very bad strategy for the future for our own mining industry?

● (1625)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, the kind of relationship that is being built by our colleagues across the floor has really been bothering me, saying that just because we are speaking against the dangers and the impact of asbestos, we are speaking against all mining. Linking it with all mining and all the other minerals and ores that we mine in our amazing mining industry, does not do service to our resource sector. I actually think it sends a very mixed and funny message out there.

We are not talking about mining or our resources in general. We are talking about one dangerous product.

In a similar way, when I talk about pharmaceutical drugs, I am talking about pharmaceutical drugs that we use under supervision. I am not talking about cocaine or heroin. They are two separate things. Both are called drugs, but I do not put them into the same basket.

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to speak on behalf of my fellow residents of Thetford Mines in this debate, which affects them more than the people in any other community in Canada.

The people of my region have lived with chrysotile every day for over 100 years. They work in a mine themselves, or they have worked there or they all have friends or family who have worked there. They have also been on the front lines in all of the battles surrounding chrysotile.

The workers in my region were the first to alert the world to the risks associated with the misuse of asbestos. Members will recall the asbestos strike in 1949. That is where it started. There is history and there is logic in all of this. Yes, there were dangerous conditions at that time, and yes, they have been refined. What we are talking about here is risk management. The toxicity of the product is not being questioned, as in the case of many other minerals and metals, but we are talking about risk management. That is the argument. I have heard nothing about that from the NDP today.

The workers in my region are also the ones who, with the employers and the governments of Quebec and Canada, helped to develop the approach to the safe and controlled use of chrysotile. That approach serves as a model throughout the world today, and it is a legacy of which my region is very proud. Unfortunately, that legacy has been tarnished today by all the disinformation campaigns conducted by pressure groups, groups that are often international and very highly organized. Today what we have is a battle that the workers have to fight, a battle against the disinformation campaigns designed to deprive them of an honest living and deprive our region of a source of considerable and perfectly legitimate prosperity. There is trade today at the global level, legally, and there is still demand, demand that I would mention in passing is growing. The machines we send into space could not return in complete safety without the use of this mineral. Those are the facts.

Business of Supply

Need I also point out that this production represents an export value of nearly \$100 million, or about 10% of world production? This courageous battle is being fought by the workers against great odds. It is too easy here in Ottawa to forget our regions and not hear them, as is proven by everything I have heard from the other side of the House since the day began. That is why I am proud to represent these workers today. They have a voice, a voice that sticks to the facts. That is why I am also proud to be part of a government that listens to the regions and cares about their development and their prosperity. As I said, the same certainly cannot be said about the NDP.

If there is a natural resources project that brings jobs and opportunities to a rural community, the NDP does everything it can to close it down, deny that though it will. This is a very disturbing trend, and one that is on a steady upswing. In Quebec, they talk about chrysotile. In Ontario, they talk about mining in the northern forests. In the territories, it is mines again. In Saskatchewan, it is uranium. In Alberta, it is the oil sands, and in British Columbia, it is oil pipelines. Have we often heard positive questions in the House about this? Never. It is always negative.

I will expand later on the many measures our government has taken for the development of our regions. But first I would like to set the record straight on a few points relating to chrysotile.

First, it is important to clarify the difference between chrysotile fibre and other asbestos fibres, something else I have not heard anything about in the House today. We know that the trade name "asbestos" is used to describe two distinct groups of natural mineral fibres that exist in rock formations around the world. First, there is amphibole, which is banned everywhere in the world, with good reason. It is a dangerous fibre because it is sharp. It also has dangerous repercussions on health, repercussions that, most importantly, are not manageable. Then there is serpentine fibre, which can be handled in a controlled and safe manner.

The word "asbestos" is therefore a generic term. Chrysotile is the only asbestos fibre that does not belong to the amphibole group, but rather to the serpentine group. It is part of the group that produces this natural mineral fibre.

The various types of fibres have different characteristics. The risks associated with the use of this natural fibre are manageable when proper control measures are applied, like the ones in place in Canada.

I want to point out that our approach, the controlled use of chrysotile fibres, is the same as the approach that we follow for any other important mineral or industrial product that may involve risks.

As well, we achieve this by applying appropriate regulations, and by adhering to precise programs and practices. Exposure to chrysotile is subject to stringent monitoring, and so it should be.

We impose federal, provincial and territorial restrictions on the exposure of workers to the product, and we prohibit certain specific industrial and consumer products under the Hazardous Products Act of Canada.

● (1630)

Chrysotile asbestos is not used in products for public use that may decompose or turn to dust and that may at the same time release asbestos particles into the air. That is clear. It has to be encapsulated.

When it is used in industrial applications, chrysotile is subject to stringent monitoring under the provisions on exposure limits set out in occupational health and safety legislation.

The position of the Government of Canada regarding chrysotile fibre has been known for a very long time. Our actions in this regard are responsible and transparent. We support the safe use of chrysotile, just as we support the safe use of many other products that may involve risks if they are mishandled. Again, we are talking about risk management here. The level of toxicity is not at issue here. We know that it can be toxic when mishandled or misused.

The Government of Canada does not ban substances found in nature. Rather, the government's policy is based on management of the risks presented by the products and practices that derive from those substances, at the right time and in the right place. This is a responsible approach. We have adopted measures to ensure that risks are kept to a minimum and are managed very rigorously.

The Government of Canada has advocated the controlled use of chrysotile since 1979. Chrysotile is governed by the Consumer Product Safety Act. The objective of the regulations is to prevent consumers being exposed to products that contain asbestos and in which the fibres can easily separate, be inhaled and have toxic effects on health. As well, we encourage importing countries to adopt measures to ensure the controlled use of chrysotile and products containing chrysotile. Chrysotile is a completely safe product if it is handled properly, as is the case for a host of products that may present risks under certain conditions. Responsible trade is central to Canadian values and the values of our government. As I said earlier, our government cares about the development of the regions of Quebec and Canada.

I would now like to talk about the measures we have taken in this regard. The mining industry is an economic engine in Canada and our regions. We are a land of natural resources. So it is entirely appropriate for us to exploit them in a proper and sustainable way. In 2010, mining and mineral processing contributed over \$40 billion to our gross domestic product and employed over 350,000 people. At the same time, the industry acknowledges the impacts its activities may have on our environment. In fact, the environmental performance of the mining industry has improved considerably in recent decades. In partnership with governments, it has demonstrated leadership in research and development, and efforts to that end must continue. It is therefore essential to adopt innovative technological solutions that will allow mineral products to be exploited sustainably and the value of those products, including chrysotile, to be increased.

In May 2009, Natural Resources Canada launched the green mining initiative, with the aim of finding ways to reduce the environmental impact of mining and contribute to improving the competitiveness of the Canadian mining sector in environmental terms. The program is based on a partnership composed of the mining industry, the federal, provincial and territorial governments, non-governmental organizations and academia.

Business of Supply

This initiative includes four pillars. First, it focuses on reducing the footprint of mining by finding methods to extract the maximum amount of minerals while leaving waste rock behind. We are also developing technologies to process these minerals and extract the metals in a more environmentally friendly way. For example, we are aiming to decrease greenhouse gases and energy consumption by working on developing hybrid underground vehicles. This prototype—the first of its kind in the world—was developed at our experimental mine in Val-d'Or, in collaboration with a Canadian manufacturer.

The second pillar is to innovate in waste management and treatment technologies, which will enable us to lower costs for maintaining mining sites and to have fewer mine closures. The third pillar is that we are looking at new approaches to improve mine closure and rehabilitation methods. The fourth pillar is that we are looking to better understand the tangible effects of mine waste on flora and fauna. The challenge is to leave the ecosystem in good health at the end of the production cycle. This initiative applies to all sectors of the mining industry, and chrysotile is no exception.

•(1635)

This is why, in Thetford Mines, we initiated a research project to look at the economic opportunities that mine waste can offer. The purpose of the project is to get an overview of the physical and chemical composition of waste at extraction sites. We will examine all of the documentation on the subject and will analyze samples of waste and nearby waters. The results will enable us to assess the chemical changes or stability of the waste when it is subject to erosion and water ingress, to identify mineral elements that could provide business opportunities and to examine sustainable extraction methods for the reprocessing of waste.

This project could eventually lead to secondary activities at the same sites. The region has worked hard in recent years to diversify its economic base, and our government has been a part of that. The project I just mentioned is an excellent example. Another example of our government's efforts is the recent announcement by the Prime Minister himself of an important project, the natural gas pipeline between Vallée-Jonction and Thetford Mines.

With this investment of over \$18 million, the government is supporting the construction of a \$24 million pipeline that will provide a source of safe, inexpensive energy—natural gas. The project will spur economic development and diversification in the region and the surrounding communities. It will allow companies to become more competitive and will encourage others to set up in the region, thereby contributing to creating wealth and jobs.

This contribution by the Government of Canada is an exceptional measure for diversifying the economic base of our region. I also want to mention the financial contributions totalling \$474,000 for setting up and operating two research centres located in Thetford Mines that are the pride of business people in the area. The Centre de technologie minérale et de plasturgie provides professional expertise in the plastics and minerals sectors. The Centre collégial de transfert de technologie en oléochimie industrielle offers businesses applied research services, technical assistance and information in the fields of synthetic organic chemistry and oleochemistry.

My constituents in Thetford Mines have worked hard to diversify our economy. Today, they can be proud of what they have accomplished and look toward the future. However, they will never accept that this diversification might be done to the detriment of the asbestos industry. They are not mutually exclusive. Asbestos is part of the history of my region, but it is also part of our present and our future.

The Thetford Mines region, like other regions in Quebec and Canada, knows that it can count on our government for support in its future development and in the appropriate and sustainable development of its natural resources. The region knows it can count on us for its diversification efforts as well. They are not mutually exclusive, as I was saying. It also knows it can count on a government that recognizes the importance of our natural resources to the economy of the country and of our regions, including the region of Thetford Mines.

•(1640)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): 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, Service Canada; the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River, The Economy; the hon. member for Random—Burin—St. George's, The G8 Summit.

The hon. member for Nickel Belt.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the minister.

He said in his speech that asbestos has been mined in Thetford Mines for over 100 years. I would like to know if he can tell us how many miners have died over the past 100 years because of asbestos. The Conservatives say that they have scientific evidence to prove that asbestos mining is not dangerous. I am wondering if the minister could table those documents so that we can consult them.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Speaker, this is a surprising question from a miner from a mining area. Clearly, he is stuck in the past. In the 1950s and 1960s, practices surrounding the use of asbestos were not appropriate, for example, asbestos spraying, which allowed fibres to float freely in the air. I am talking here about the safe use of asbestos, which has developed since 1979, where the fibre is encapsulated. The other practices are not safe and we no longer want anything to do with them. The number of airborne fibres compares favourably to that in a number of other sectors in the industry.

I am the Minister of Industry, not the Minister of Transport; I want to make that correction for the purpose of the transcript. I am sure the hon. member knows that there is also international pressure to ban nickel. We are in the same boat in that respect. I am not trying to compare mines or anything. The Government of Quebec has decided to operate chrysotile asbestos mines because it is possible to do so in a safe and controlled manner. We can share expertise. We will not be pressured by international regulations to impose an inappropriate ban.

Business of Supply

The hon. member for Nickel Belt must know that his region is facing the same pressure. Let us not confuse the issue. It is time to live in the present. I grew up in the Thetford Mines area and I do not need all ten fingers to count the number of people who have died from an occupational illness related to asbestos mining.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the minister's speech and, from listening to comments made all day by members across, there is a hypocrisy that I would like him to comment on.

When the member for Outremont was a member of the national assembly, he actually voted to ensure that this was not a part of the Rotterdam Convention. Now that member is running for leader of the NDP.

The member for Toronto Centre, the current interim leader of the Liberal Party, said that with the new modern techniques of mining this could be mined in a very safe way. Those are the comments that he made at a fundraiser in 2008.

I wonder if the minister could comment on some of the hypocrisy we are now hearing from the other side of the floor.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Speaker, when the member for Outremont was the minister of the environment in Quebec back in 2004, the national assembly took part in a vote on a unanimous motion from the Quebec government asking that chrysotile not be on the Rotterdam list. In 2006, the NDP made a commitment to its Quebec faction to ensure that chrysotile would not be listed on the Rotterdam Convention. They were against a ban and in favour of the safe use of that fibre.

The Liberal leader, back in 2009, put on the record that a ban would be ideological because it would be manageable. It is very curious to hear that today the opposition members have changed their minds. I do not know why.

I wonder why the 58 MPs from the Quebec caucus are supporting such a bizarre position since the Government of Quebec wants to extract its resources and share its expertise. The premier just put that on the record.

It is very surprising to see such a flip-flop.

•(1645)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I share a friendship with my colleague across the way, except on this. We have found our way to disagreement.

He was talking about members of the NDP and Liberals who have said some things contrary to their party's position. I will read something for my friend. It reads:

We should just list it. What isn't right is to ship something to some country and say, 'We won't tell you what's in this. Don't worry about it. The important thing to me is to tell people about the risk. ... It is demonstrably bad for you, this stuff.'

That was said by Chuck Strahl, who is also a friend. He sat in the Conservative cabinet for quite a while. He suffers from a very serious and grave illness due to exposure to asbestos. Is Chuck Strahl wrong or is it time to finally list this and tell people what it is that they are exposed to?

We need to put it on the package. We need to say what everybody knows: this is dangerous.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge that we have a good friendship, but on this point I do not agree with my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

What we are talking about today is a ban. We are not talking about Rotterdam. A ban would mean that the day we ban it, Canada would be out of business. There is a growing demand in the world, and we can share the responsible expertise that has been developed by our own workers here very seriously.

If we ban that natural substance, there will be a need for substitutes. There are projects for substitutes for which the biopersistence, most of which are longer than chrysotile.

There is a legitimate question to be asked that was never asked by the NDP. Does the NDP want to go with the false feeling of security in dealing with the mineral that has been the most studied one in the world? We accept that there is a toxicity level that we need to deal with but it is manageable. This is the irrationality of the position here. It is a risk-managed issue.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

I would like to just say that Canadians are very fortunate to have someone who believes so passionately and is so effective in creating wealth and prosperity in a sustainable manner for Canadians.

I reflected on his opening comments about how members of the NDP seem to have a pattern of putting down our natural resource industries. On one hand, they claim to represent something in the environmental area or claim to support labour, when in fact their environmental policies would put a lot of union workers out of work. Or, they do not recognize the value that the natural resource industry has.

Canadians are very frustrated with the apparent hypocrisy of the NDP on all issues dealing with natural resources.

I wonder if the minister could elaborate on his vision for the natural resources industry in Canada and also point out why Canadians are so frustrated with the NDP's position on natural resources?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Speaker, I share the member's frustration. We see that "never in my backyard" position from the NDP.

It will always go against natural resources projects. Members, like the members for Nickel Belt and Sudbury, have the same kinds of issue and must face international pressures about that.

Business of Supply

We are talking about a risk-managed issue. This is the idea here. Once the NDP is done with chrysotile, what will be next? That is the problem. The NDP will be all over the map and it will want to ban everything. As I said, we have natural resources projects everywhere in the country that we should be proud of. Now the NDP is standing up against Keystone XL, nuclear and everything. It means that we would have to shut down our country. We are a natural resources country. We must stand up for our natural resources and we need to develop it in a sustainable and appropriate way. This is what we are working toward.

• (1650)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan.

I suppose it is with some anticipation but regret that I enter this debate, because I find it incredible that the government must be called to account again over such a fundamental choice, the choice before it and before us as Canadians, as to whether to support and prop up an industry that is, not to be too hyperbolic, dying a natural death.

The industry is not supported by the markets. As a government that believes in the magic of the invisible hand, the government continues to dump money into the asbestos industry. It does not do it for other mining companies or other products. I know this because I come from a district that does a great deal of mining.

The asbestos industry has somehow become the sacred cow for the government. To have to defend something like asbestos must make some in those benches feel great discomfort, because it puts in front of Canadians an aspect of profound and dangerous hypocrisy. There is not a Conservative who would want chrysotile or any other kind of asbestos put into their homes. Why not? It is because we do not allow it in this country. Why not? It is because we should not allow it in this country, yet the same Conservative members somehow find comfort in sending it overseas, where there are virtually no building codes and there is no ability to promise that there will be any safe or determined handling of it. Conservatives say, for some of the most crass and coarse political calculations possible, that they will continue to dump money into it and continue to turn a blind eye.

While the Conservatives are entitled to their own opinions, they are not entitled to their own facts. The facts of the matter are that according to every health organization in this country and around the world, there is no safe use of asbestos, full stop—not chrysotile, not white, not otherwise. It is a fact. We cannot find doctors who are actual doctors, as opposed to the shills that the asbestos lobby pops up every once in a while, the same guys who were used by the tobacco industry. I do not mean similar people; I mean the exact same experts with “doctor” in front of their names. We find out they are doctors of geography or theology, yet the industry props them up and says, “Doctor so-and-so says asbestos is safe”.

However, the fact is that as taxpayers we have spent millions of dollars taking asbestos out of our Parliament buildings. We cannot go into the West Block anymore, because we are taking asbestos out of those offices. Heaven forbid that any member of Parliament or senator or member of our staff would be exposed to a minute of

asbestos, but anyone happening to live in India, Indonesia or Sri Lanka who wants a trading relationship with Canada is going to get this stuff from Canada. Heaven forbid that we put even a warning label on the packages to tell them that the use of this material is seriously harmful for their health as workers. That is why union after union that is concerned with the health and safety of its members has stood up and said this is wrong. For many years this has been a struggle within the union movement.

One has to wonder, after all the years of debate around the safe use of tobacco, where the Conservatives would have stood on that question. They refuse to admit it as the evidence mounts from the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Québec Medical Association. One group of cancer experts after another has come forward and said unequivocally that there is no way to use asbestos in a way that will not eventually kill the people exposed. The Conservatives say, “Never mind; we are just going to put it in concrete. That will make it safe. It will be embedded in concrete so that no one gets exposed”. Obviously, in the developing world there are never natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, or floods that would break a building apart and then cause the asbestos to crack out of the concrete and be exposed.

At the heart of the debate and the motion we are moving today is the hypocrisy of the government in saying it cares a whit about workers' health and safety or at all about Canada's international reputation. Since 1984 we as taxpayers have pumped more than \$50 million into the asbestos lobby, for goodness' sake. All those Canadians out there are working hard and paying their taxes, and a bit of those taxes has been going to help promote asbestos exports from this country.

• (1655)

As we go out and campaign around this issue across the country, the first thing I find is that Canadians first have to be convinced that we are actually still exporting asbestos. In this modern day and age when we all know the dangers, they do not believe it.

If a newsletter was sent home from your kid's school that said, “We found asbestos in the school, but we're just going to leave it there”, all the parents in the country would be pulling their kids out of school the next day.

We have come to the realization that any exposure is bad. This is important: it is not that someone needs to be exposed to a great quantity of asbestos or to have that exposure happen over many decades; any single exposure has been proven to have the capacity to cause a debilitating form of cancer that essentially suffocates the victims to death.

It is the number one industrial killer in the world today, according to the World Health Organization, and these guys think that is okay. They think dragging Canada's reputation through the mud internationally, exposing workers the world over to this known carcinogen for the most narrow and crass of political considerations is okay. They are entitled to their opinions, but not their own facts.

Business of Supply

“Safe use of asbestos”: can we put that sentence together? Let us try to rationalize that sentence to someone who is dying the slow and painful death that is related to asbestosis. Let us tell them it was “safe use” that is killing them right now—that there were safe exposure limits that they were exposed to, and that it is somehow their fault that they are now dying. Let us tell that to the families and the widows I have spoken to, who cannot believe that in 2011 we even need to have this debate.

The government needs to hear this. All the members across can look down into their notebooks and iPads and not engage in this discussion and continue to read the prepared notes from the Prime Minister's Office, but I encourage them, I demand from them, to talk to the opposition and to find the just transition that would be the ethical thing to offer to these workers. If we are talking about jobs, the government is living in a false and invented world where somehow asbestos will be made good again and these workers will have work and be able to provide for their families, when we know that according to 2009 Quebec medical studies, the exposure rates around Thetford Mines and Asbestos are off the charts.

The minister can scoff, but he knows the facts, and the NDP has a long and proud tradition of supporting workers in this country. They can accuse us of a lot, but the idea of members of the Conservative Party getting up and somehow becoming champions of the union, of the working man and woman, and suggesting that the NDP is otherwise, is a bridge too far. What we have suggested and offered, and have gone into Thetford Mines and talked to the leaders there about, is that we must provide options and a just transition program.

I ask the minister to stop dumping money into the lobbyists. They do not need Canadian taxpayer-funded support to make their case. I am sure the Speaker would not want to give them any money either.

We learned as a society to pay attention to the medical expertise around tobacco. We learned there was not a safe exposure to tobacco for a young person and that it could not be handled safely if we let our kids have tobacco in order to retain jobs. Conservative members at the time would have been saying, “Well, this is about the economy, and anyone wanting to get kids to stop smoking hurts the Canadian economy. The Conservatives believe in the Canadian economy; therefore, our kids should be smoking”.

What industry is next, they ask? I reverse the question. If they think asbestos is fantastic, why not bring back smoking? “Let us start introducing it back into the schools”, say the Conservatives.

There has to be a line in public policy where we understand that the politics may be difficult, but we can get through them. We can offer the workers who are still in this industry a just transition.

• (1700)

I will end on this: I have many mines in my riding. They open and they close. The workers are not offered just transitions when the mine closes; the markets respond, and the mine shuts down. We are offering something particular and unique in this case: the idea that we must transition to something better, something that does not make the government the hypocrite that it is and does not continue to expose workers around the world to this known deadly product.

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is refreshing to hear an NDP member speak about the virtues of the market.

As for the limits that he just mentioned, it is unfortunate that we are having this kind of debate. I do not have dust on my coat and I invite him to see for himself all the things that are being done on the ground.

The members for Compton—Stanstead, Sherbrooke and Drummond are not here. Will they intervene in the debate? I know the member for Richmond—Arthabaska will, but will the others?

Also, we are now comparing the safe use of asbestos chrysotile with smoking, which is total nonsense. As well, use of chrysotile asbestos is growing in the world; if it is banned, what would he see being used as a substitute, perhaps with higher bio-persistence? How can he assure people about substitutes when we do not have any idea about them? It is kind of irresponsible, and I would like to hear his views on that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I have some experience with this argument because I introduced a private member's bill in a previous Parliament to ban a certain type of chemical in plastics, a softener that was an endocrine disrupter and a known carcinogen. As it moved through Parliament, the government raised the same issues, as did industry. They said there were no good replacements. Government members said there were no known replacements and that any replacement they could find would be very expensive. This is exactly how industry, which is being targeted for exposing people to risky products, always responds. It is the same argument in reverse that the tobacco industry used for years. It asked for proof that smoking gave people cancer, said it could not be done, and said it would provide experts who would say otherwise.

Of course, industry is going to defend itself to the nth degree, because that is what it does, but the role of government is to defend the rights and interests of Canadians and, as a further extension, to stop promoting the use of something that we know kills people and at the very least to slap a label on it that says it is dangerous. To suggest asbestos is not dangerous while neither the minister himself nor any of his colleagues will put it in their homes is what we call hypocrisy. We must do better than this, and we can.

[Translation]

That is true.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing from the other side of the House that the NDP does not know what it is talking about, but I have here a list of doctors. It includes Dr. Turcotte from Quebec, Dr. Auger from Quebec, Dr. Last from Ottawa, Dr. Gosselin from Quebec, Dr. Bustinza from Quebec, Dr. Byers, Dr. Brophy. The list goes on and on. Can the hon. member tell me if it is only the Conservatives and members of the Flat Earth Society who do not believe that asbestos is dangerous?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, this is the danger when an ideology is overrun: there is no capacity for a government to listen to reason and fact. It is not just the doctors listed by my hon. colleague, but the associations that they belong to and represent, which are many more health experts in the field from within Quebec and from without, across the rest of the country and around the world.

One cannot get a doctor who deals with cancer every day to suggest that exposure to asbestos is a good idea for anybody. Such a doctor cannot be found, other than the shills who were brought out during the tobacco industry debates. Those folks should have their licences ripped away, as far as I am concerned.

Part of the Hippocratic oath is “do no harm”. Government ministers should take a similar oath when they enter into cabinet. They should do no harm and stop propping up the industry, stop giving the industry taxpayers' money and allow the labelling and ban of asbestos to finally come to full and outright completion, because it is wrong, and the government must understand that it is wrong.

• (1705)

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been waiting patiently for the opposition to talk about the fourth item in its motion, which says it wants the government to:

introduce measures dedicated to affected older workers, through the employment insurance program, to assure them of a decent standard of living until retirement

I notice it did not say “after” retirement.

We are talking about asbestos. I can hardly wait to hear the member's comments on this item in the motion.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it shows a profound lack of knowledge of the employment insurance program because it does not go beyond retirement, but I take my colleague's point.

The \$50 million we have already socked into this industry might be better spent just paying people not to go to work. I would be much better for their health and the health of the planet if we just simply took the money we have dumped into the lobbyists' pockets and into the pockets of lawyers who fight this thing at Rotterdam and every convention.

The government has finally been exposed because even India, Ukraine and other countries that have been doing their government's dirty work at the Rotterdam Convention and preventing listing have said, “You're right, world, we should list this”, and only the Conservative government is ruining Canada's reputation by being the one opposing any listing and common sense.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for so eloquently outlining some of the concerns that the NDP has with this continued mining and exporting of asbestos.

I also want to acknowledge the member for Nickel Belt for introducing the motion and the member for Winnipeg Centre, who has long been a tireless advocate in the House, for speaking up about the dangers of asbestos mining and asbestos export.

I will not read the entire motion, but just a reminder, we are calling for a ban on the use and export of all forms of asbestos and a just transition plan for asbestos-producing workers and communities, a program for older workers that the member opposite mentioned, and an investment fund to encourage diversification.

Many people have spoken in the House about the dangers of mining and handling asbestos. We are talking about an industry in the province of Quebec that is focused on the export world. Although asbestos is banned in more than 50 countries, including most developed nations, Canada continues to be a leading producer and exporter of asbestos.

We export nearly 200,000 tonnes per year into poor and developing nations, making us the fourth-largest exporter in the world and the lead promoter of asbestos in developing countries. Our primary customers for Canadian asbestos are Indonesia, India and the Philippines, where workers lack the most basic protections and safe working conditions.

In this debate Conservatives have criticized New Democrats because they claim that we are hard on resource industries. One would wonder where the responsibility lies. What is that numerical number? What is that dollar figure that says that we will not only jeopardize our workers in the industry, but we will also jeopardize the workers in other countries? Where is that number that says that is a responsible thing for Canadians to do?

I want to turn for a moment to an organization called Ban Asbestos Network of India, BANI. The people of that organization put out an article in March 2009. It says, “Ban on Indigenous Chrysotile Asbestos Mining Lifted”. This was talking about India. The article highlighted a number of concerns that it had been lobbying hard on with its government.

The organization indicated that it had written letters, drawing urgent attention toward a serious and unprecedented environmental and occupational health crisis with regard to an unnoticed asbestos epidemic in the country. Even if one asbestos fibre reaches the right place, it causes irreversible damage, leading to asbestosis, lung cancer or mesothelioma. Thirty deaths are caused per day from asbestos-related diseases, as per estimates based on U.S. and European studies.

It drew attention to the order of the Kerala State Human Rights Commission that ruled that exposing Indians to asbestos was a human rights violation. It goes on to say that it had requested the registrar of asbestos handlers and victims to develop a compensation fund and award people who had been exposed and suffered illness or subsequently death in their own country. It says:

How handicapped has our environmental regulatory bodies is best illustrated in the manner in which asbestos is allowed to be used in the country despite the fact that some 50 countries have banned it and even International Labour Organisation and World Health Organisation call for its elimination. Even World Trade Organisation upheld the right of the Europe to ban this incurable cancer causing killer fiber. In case of asbestos, a carcinogen...

Later on the article says:

When the world is preparing and planning to get rid of all forms of asbestos, it makes us look stupid in India to be still importing it and lifting the ban on chrysotile asbestos mining, we should devote our scarce resources to prevent the impending disaster by phasing it out as soon as we can. Safer substitute materials for white asbestos are available, they should be considered for us.

This is a cry from India, where hundreds of people have died because they are exposed to asbestos. As this article points out, even one fibre can have an adverse effect.

The World Health Organization says to stop the use of asbestos, and this is from an article, "More Pressures on India to Ban Harmful Asbestos Use". It says:

● (1710)

The WHO estimates that about 125 million people in the world are exposed to asbestos at the workplace, and that over 107,000 people die each year from asbestos-related lung cancer...and asbestosis due to occupational exposure. In collaboration with other industries, the WHO works with countries to eliminate asbestos-related diseases. It recognizes that the most efficient means of doing so is to stop the use of all types of asbestos.

The same article says that the Supreme Court of India has already accepted the adverse affects of asbestos. In acknowledging the dangers of asbestos, the Supreme Court stated that "there can be no doubt that uncontrolled utilization of asbestos, in any form, can be hazardous to human health".

Referring to an earlier 1995 judgment that outlined strict guidelines for asbestos use, the court stated that it had already "accepted the well-established adverse effects of asbestos including the risk beyond the work place", yet we are still actively seeking markets in India despite the fact that there is significant opposition in India to this Canadian industry.

Although this is a different kind of asbestos, I want to point out that we have historically said that asbestos is fine, only to discover later on that it had such severe effects that whole families were almost wiped out. Six members of one family are now dead.

At one time the now vilified Zonolite insulation was the darling of the Canadian government. It even provided grants through the Canadian home insulation program to encourage Canadian homeowners to install Zonolite in their homes. The grants were offered from 1977 through 1984 and it is estimated that 200,000 to 300,000 Canadians took the government up on its offer and installed the now lethal substance. Does this sound familiar? The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley talked about the fact that we used to support and promote smoking. We used to promote and support Zonolite and 200,000 to 300,000 Canadians ended up with it in their homes.

Business of Supply

First nations families are living in homes that are asbestos contaminated and they have even less resources to deal with some of these problems. I am going to tell the House about a woman who lost six members of her family. The article states:

For the ThunderSky family, however, the problems started long before that.

That's because the Canadian government installed asbestos-tainted insulation in hundreds of first nations homes in the 1950s. That's where ThunderSky believes she and her doomed family were first exposed to the deadly asbestos that has cost the Canadian woman six members of her immediate family.

It goes on to say:

Mesothelioma and asbestos-related disease can lie dormant for decades before it emerges. To that end it is not uncommon for a worker in an asbestos-laden environment, or even a resident in a home outfitted with asbestos insulation, to go for 30 to 50 years before symptoms finally emerge.

Asbestos is a ticking time bomb. Workers who continue to work in the field are continually exposed to it. Some members pointed out earlier that not only were miners exposed to asbestos, but their families were as well. We have heard stories about how wives and children, because largely the miners are men, have died of asbestos-related cancers even though they never worked one day in the mines.

If we are truly concerned about the health and vitality of workers in our country, if we are truly concerned about the health and well-being of their communities, then we will look for ways to support a just transition out of those industries.

A member opposite talked about hearing what we would do for older workers. There used to be a good government program for older workers called POWA, or program for older worker adjustment. When an industry was in transition, the program would provide pension bridging for workers of a certain age so they could retire in dignity.

I have a long list of organizations that have talked about the dangers of mining asbestos and using it, but unfortunately, I do not have enough time to read them. However, many organizations in countries throughout the world say that asbestos is not safe in any form.

I urge all members of the House to support the motion put forward by the member for Nickel Belt.

● (1715)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the NDP decided to condemn that fibre. The NDP does not make any difference in the time it uses and the fibre itself. The NDP speaks about Zonolite and amphibole. Amphibole has been banned. The NDP speaks about uses from decades ago. When we speak about the West Block, this was used decades ago. Now we are talking about safe use of the chrysotile fibre. That means it has to be encapsulated. This is a safe-use policy that has been developed through the years.

Starting from that assumption, has the member consulted with the member for Compton—Stanstead, who was born and grew up in the asbestos area in Windsor, Quebec, as to why the member is not intervening here?

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Did the member consult her colleague from Compton—Stanstead, who was born in Asbestos and grew up in Windsor, Quebec, in the Asbestos region? Does that member agree that his party does not believe that safe use is possible? As for toxicity, we know that it is toxic. It is a question of risk management. Have they consulted anyone about this?

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, there are really two issues here. One is the mining of asbestos and the other is the export into countries where there are not safe practices to protect workers.

As far as the minister is concerned, it is fine to mine a product here, which he claims is mined safely, and there are many dissenting opinions on that. Even if we could buy that argument, he is saying that it is absolutely okay to export it to developing countries where those workers have no protection.

It would seem to me that Canada needs to take some responsibility for the end use of its product. At a minimum, the government could have signed on to the Rotterdam Convention, but chose to block it in every way possible.

I simply do not buy the argument that we cannot disassociate the mining of this product from the end use. A responsible government would take a look at what the rest of the world is saying about this and sign on to the Rotterdam Convention.

[Translation]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her speech. It was very informative.

The use of asbestos in Canada is tightly regulated by Canada's Hazardous Products Act. Yet the member for Mégantic—L'Érable said that chrysotile fibres can be used safely. I am trying to understand this better. I would also like to know what my colleague thinks of the fact that Canada has not signed the Rotterdam Convention and how much this affects the use of chrysotile fibres in the developing world. It can be very unsafe and dangerous for the people of other countries.

• (1720)

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a very good point around that. Many of us come from resourced-based communities. Of course we want industry in our communities. However, we also want the workers in those industries to be safe. We want them to be safe and we want to take some responsibility for where those end products line up and where workers do not have the kind of hazard management practices and safe practices in the workplace. The government's failure to support the Rotterdam Convention is so it does not have to take any responsibility for that end use, so it can continue to claim the product is safe, so it can continue not to have the product labelled for the kind of hazard it actually is, putting those workers at risk in other countries.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

As the House knows, the policy of the Canadian government with regard to mining and use of chrysotile is very clear. For more than 30 years Canada has promoted the safe and controlled use of chrysotile both nationally and internationally. It has been the position of successive federal governments, both Conservative and Liberal. It has been the position of successive Quebec governments, both Liberal and Parti Québécois. It continues to be the same position of the Charest government as it was in 2004 when the NDP member for Outremont voted against the inclusion of chrysotile in the Rotterdam Convention.

That is an important point. The development of natural resources is a matter of provincial jurisdiction. Banning the mining of any natural resource is an intrusion into provincial jurisdiction, and as such I will oppose this motion.

I would like to focus on the part of the motion that deals with worker retraining and older workers.

As the House knows, our government has taken significant steps to ensure older workers are put in the best position to succeed should they ever lose their job. It is interesting that the NDP has included a clause on worker retraining in this motion because, whenever our government has put forward measures for older workers, each and every time the NDP has voted against them, so the NDP probably cannot be trusted this time either.

Canadians know that when our government puts forward a plan, we deliver. Canadians know our focus has remained on economic growth and getting Canadians jobs. Key actions taken by this government specifically through our economic action plan have played a key role in steering the economic recovery from the deepest global recession since the 1930s. As a result of our quick and decisive measures, almost 656,000 jobs have been created since the depths of the recession in July 2009, the strongest employment growth in the G7.

We also continue to demonstrate strong economic stewardship as we wind down many of the temporary stimulus measures and take additional steps to secure the recovery.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan announced earlier this year is to ensure Canadians remain on the right track for economic growth and jobs. Part of these measures is an awareness that we need to help workers who are in transition. This is where we are working closely with provinces and territories to equip Canadians with skills so they can take advantage of opportunities and achieve self-sufficiency. We are also providing targeted supports to those facing particular barriers to entering the workforce.

This government has acted to invest in Canadians. Each year we provide almost \$2.5 billion to provinces and territories so they can deliver critical services and supports to Canadian workers needing help transitioning to new jobs.

Let us first focus on some of the help we provide under the employment insurance plan. In addition to the billions of dollars we provide in necessary income support to unemployed Canadians, we also provide provinces and territories close to \$2 billion per year through labour market development agreements so they can provide training and employment programs for individuals eligible for EI. Through the labour market development agreements with the provinces and territories, about 600,000 workers across the country are getting training and employment support each and every year. Of these, over 100,000 are Canadians over the age of 50.

We are focusing on retraining workers so they have the skills to get good jobs in the growth industries of the 21st century. These include industries such as information and communications technology, biotechnology, energy, natural resources and environmental technology. We also provide \$500 million each year to further support provincial and territorial initiatives that help meet the training needs of Canadians who are not eligible for employment insurance. This funding is provided through our labour market agreements, LMAs. LMA-funded training is particularly important for under-represented groups in the labour market including but not limited to older workers, people with disabilities, and employed individuals who have low levels of literacy and essential skills.

• (1725)

In fact, in the first two years of these agreements close to 550,000 individuals were served. No Canadian must be left behind is the watch phrase of our government. We are committed to being inclusive in building a prosperous Canada, and the funding that we provide to provinces and territories demonstrates this well.

I would also like to mention a third program through which our government is helping workers in transition, the targeted initiative for older workers. We know older workers are key to helping us meet the demographic challenge. Their experience and knowledge are valuable in the workplace. However, unemployed older workers face unique challenges in reintegrating into the workforce. That is why we introduced the targeted initiative for older workers, TIOW.

TIOW is a federal, provincial, territorial cost-shared initiative that provides employment supports to unemployed older workers living in vulnerable communities affected by high unemployment and/or significant downsizing or closures. Through TIOW projects, older workers are offered a combination of activities, including job search, skills training, and work experience. Let me emphasize that our support for older workers has complemented the labour market agreements with the provinces. We are well aware of the success of TIOW—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I am loath to interrupt my friend midstream, but I have been trying to understand what this has to do with a ban on the export of chrysotile asbestos. He has talked about older worker transition programs. He has spoken about the government's now-ended economic action plan.

I have been listening intently for a reference back to asbestos. If the member is suggesting in his comments that he is talking about transition programs for asbestos workers, I am all ears, but I have not heard anything about the topic at hand.

Business of Supply

The previous Speaker has ruled on this a number of times and encouraged government members to get off the PMO notes and back onto the topic. I would encourage my friend to do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Members know it is important to keep the topic of the presentation relevant to the subject at hand. Members are given a broad berth in order to make their points and bring that relevance in terms of their speech, as the case may be. I am sure that the hon. member was coming to how this would connect with the topic of the day.

On the same point, the Minister of Industry.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley to reread the motion. The motion also proposes measures for economic diversification. I do not want to hear anyone trying to divide the motion in order to lead the debate in another direction. My colleague is free to debate the entire motion, and I say this with all due respect.

• (1730)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): That essentially reinforces the point that was made earlier. Again, members are given the ability to make these points and may use considerable explanation to come to how this would be relevant to the motion in front of us.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, I would refer that member to paragraph (c) of his motion. Maybe that would clarify the issue.

Let me emphasize that our support for older workers has really complemented the labour market agreements with the provinces. We are well aware of the success of TIOW and so are others. Just ask the more than 16,000 older workers who have participated so far. TIOW is a striking example of co-operation within the federal system. Our commitment to older workers stands firm.

Canada's economic action plan, introduced in 2009, included time limited targeted investments to address immediate needs during the economic global recession. These investments have made a strong and positive impact, and have helped propel us through the recovery.

Business of Supply

Maintaining attachment to the workforce was our primary objective, and due to the success in helping Canadians, funding has increased for LMDAs, LMAs and TIOW. We transferred an additional \$1 billion over two years to expand support for skills upgrading for EI eligible workers through the labour market development agreements.

We provided \$500 million for a two-year period under the strategic training and transition fund with the goal of helping workers retrain to stay employed or transition to new jobs. This funding was delivered through the labour market agreements. We also provided an additional \$60 million over three years.

We work with the provinces to ensure programs are in place to help local economies succeed. When they do not succeed, we help workers transition to new employment.

What we do not do is tell them whether or not to mine their natural resources. That is their choice. Instead, we work from the health, safety and environmental perspective to ensure that best practices are employed. As it relates to chrysotile, that formula has been in place for 30 years.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that my colleague brought that speech around to a discussion on natural resources.

He said that the federal government does not interfere with the choice of natural resources, but quite clearly for the last five years the Conservative government has provided funding to an agency that actually promotes the sale of this product in other countries. To somehow suggest that the federal government is removed from the process of selling chrysotile asbestos in other countries is wrong. The federal government is a full-size partner in the sale of these resources to countries where standards are not in any way equal to Canadian working standards.

How can my colleague say that the federal government is separated from the provinces on the disposition of chrysotile asbestos?

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, the mining of natural resources is under provincial jurisdiction. He knows that as well as I do. He is from one of territories and should be well aware of that. I am sure there is a lot of mining there. I do not think his territory would want the federal government interfering in which mines go forward and which do not.

The NDP has a paragraph in its motion regarding training for workers. Is it not a bit of a hypocrisy when any time we put money into training that party always votes against it? I find that to be quite interesting.

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the remarks by my colleague from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, and I congratulate him. I believe he has taken a position that is in keeping with that of our government, namely that we do not interfere in areas of provincial jurisdiction when it comes to the extraction, processing and use of natural resources.

The same goes for agriculture, for example, where we support supply management. Frankly, the NDP does not have a position on that.

Today's debate once again demonstrates that the NDP has taken a position that is counter to the interests of our regions by advocating the elitist policies of its leadership. This position is completely out of sync with the prevailing view in Canada, a country rich in natural resources.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

● (1735)

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the question.

[English]

I would love to elaborate on how the NDP obviously is not fit to govern this great country.

Here we have a province that has some jurisdiction over a particular sector of the economy and those folks would have us go in, do whatever, and pick the winners and the losers. That is not the way a federal government should operate.

A federal government is there to support the provinces in their direction. One province may choose to go one way and another province may choose to go another way. We are there to support that. We are not supposed to get involved in provincial jurisdictions.

I agree with the minister that the NDP official opposition certainly is not ready for prime time.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a study conducted in 2009 concluded that the concentration of asbestos in outdoor air in Thetford Mines was 215 times higher than levels in samples taken throughout the United States and that the number of deaths caused by lung cancer and mesothelioma is 17 times higher there than in the general population.

The motion moved today proposes the creation of an investment fund for economic diversification in regions that produce asbestos, in order to help mine workers find other employment and improve their health.

I would like to ask my distinguished colleague opposite if he would like to help miners by supporting our motion, which would reduce health risks for people working in asbestos mines and result in regional economic diversification.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question. I must say, as I said earlier, this is a matter of provincial jurisdiction. That question must be put to the province. If the provincial government thinks the mines are dangerous, it simply has to stop production. It is a matter of provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member who just spoke for sharing his time with me today. Of course, this matter is very important to me, considering that the town of Asbestos and the Jeffrey mine are right in the middle of my riding. I am sure you have heard a whole litany of arguments today from the NDP, the party that moved this opposition motion. Of course, they talked about the issue of chrysotile in a very demagogic, negative way.

Ever since I was elected—I may be exaggerating to say every day, but perhaps nearly every week—the member for Winnipeg Centre has been rising in this House to present petitions and make comments. Clearly, he has parliamentary immunity when he talks about serial killers and criminals. I do not want to repeat those kinds of comments here today. In the past I have had a habit of becoming angry when talking about this issue. Today I have decided to remain positive. This may come as a surprise to some of my colleagues, although I am really a very friendly, cheerful guy.

Today I would like to speak about this issue in a positive light simply because, in Quebec, there is a very interesting underground mining project. As hon. members are aware, Asbestos has suffered many negative effects as a result of the difficulties experienced by the mine. Then, Magnola Metallurgy opened a plant to produce magnesium, and invested \$1 billion in the area of Asbestos. This project lasted about a year and a half and created excellent jobs that benefited the community and offered high salaries. These jobs in the area were lost.

Clearly, the region of Asbestos is pursuing economic diversification. It is important to say it. Nevertheless, this underground mining project is very important in terms of job creation—between 400 and 500 jobs. That is a significant number. The Asbestos mine currently employs between 350 and 400 people. All in all, the mines in Asbestos and Thetford Mines employ about 1,000 people. There are also approximately 1,500 indirect jobs. We are talking about a payroll and benefits of approximately \$35 million. For the town of Asbestos, a community that has had so much difficulty, this is a pivotal moment.

I know that an NDP member made a speech today and gave the history. As the hon. members know, we are talking about strikes and all the battles that the workers fought for their health, particularly in Asbestos, and also in Thetford Mines. Today, this has been a recurrent theme among many of the members of the NDP, the party that presented this motion. They have spoken of people's health, not just the miners but also the other people who live in the area. They told all sorts of what practically seem like legends about people's health.

Did the hon. members know that Asbestos has the third-oldest population in Quebec? When I am out in public, with my riding association or anywhere, I talk to people—people I know, friends who live in Asbestos and who are seniors. Some of them worked in the mine for 35 or 40 years. Not everyone is going to die because they worked in the mine.

However, in the beginning, in the 1950s and the 1960s, it truly was hazardous. It is not for nothing that the workers and the unions fought for their health and for their rights. No one is saying it is not hazardous, but they were extracting amphiboles. A geologist not far

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from here, at the University of Ottawa, has already clearly demonstrated, when responding to doctors, that there are different types of asbestos. We cannot lump them all in the same category. There are at least half a dozen different types of asbestos.

Amphiboles used to be used for insulating homes. We often talk about the West Block here and say that MPs do not want to live in asbestos. It was used back then because it makes an excellent firewall. Obviously when it gets into the air, then it becomes a problem. If it gets into a person's lungs, it can be quite harmful and the effects can last for a very long time. The person can eventually develop cancer.

Today we are no longer mining amphibole asbestos because it is banned. We use chrysotile, chrysotile cement, in most cases. We also often hear that in the United States or in the Americas, they are no longer allowed to use asbestos and chrysotile. They only export asbestos. In the United States alone, they use chrysotile in a number of areas, including in the automobile industry for brakes and automatic transmissions. Today, they also make clothing, pipeline wrappings, roofing and slate tiles with chrysotile.

● (1740)

This is still the case everywhere, and it is one of the safest and most durable products. Why is it used a great deal in developing countries? Because they are developing, and so they are often in the process of building water systems. There is a very big difference, in terms of quality and health for the people of those countries, between a metal pipe that will rust and cause health problems for the people receiving that water and a pipe made of chrysotile cement.

We must clarify the issue. There is also a great deal of misinformation about this. André Lalonde, a mineralogist and dean of the Faculty of Science at the University of Ottawa, clearly explained the difference between the products in an article that appeared in *Le Soleil* in 2010. This is a fairly recent article in which Mr. Lalonde said:

Historically, doctors have misunderstood asbestos. We cannot blame them, since they did not study mineralogy...[however,] all of these minerals have different chemical formulae and crystalline structures. The proof that [the misunderstanding] is still present today is that people still talk about asbestos instead of talking about amphibole or chrysotile.

You need to be a geologist to understand him. I am not a geologist. However, as the town of Asbestos and the Musée minéralogique d'Asbestos are in the centre of my riding, I know a little bit more about all the types of asbestos in the world. I believe that there is also a museum of mineralogy in Thetford Mines, but that is in the riding of the Minister of Industry.

Every day, everyone, all the MPs who spoke today, will breathe asbestos in this building or outdoors. This natural resource is found in the ground everywhere. I went to a small island in my riding, which is far away from Asbestos, and there was asbestos in the ground. The people I went to visit, who are not very young and have a small cottage on this island, are the picture of health today. Asbestos is found in its natural state almost everywhere.

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You have to visit a mine, whether it be Asbestos in my riding or Thetford Mines in the Minister of Industry's riding, to understand how well the workers have done their job. Obviously, they do not want to die. Members of the family of workers at the Jeffrey mine in my riding had health problems at the time, because of what was happening. Today, occupational safety standards are extremely high. I went to visit the mine and I would have no problem staying there for a few hours and breathing the air that comes from the mine and from the place where the workers work. As well, the air is checked, but not every day. There is a laboratory, a place in the mine where people are paid solely to monitor the ambient air and make sure that the rate is safe for the workers.

There are several new NDP members. I want to remind them that not so long ago, all parties in the House were in favour of the safe use of chrysotile; everyone understood it. In 2005, I tabled a report from the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade in the House. The committee was unanimous; all parties agreed that Canada should continue to promote the safe use of chrysotile. That was not so many moons ago. It was in 2005, when I was elected.

The government was asked to adopt a national chrysotile policy based on the research, promotion and safe use of this product. The NDP voted for that. Second, the Government of Canada was asked to conduct a comparative study on the "hazardous nature" of replacement fibres and chrysotile. The NDP voted for that. And third, the Government of Canada was asked to organize a public education campaign on chrysotile and, in so doing, promote the safe use of this product domestically and internationally, and encourage its own use of chrysotile. The NDP and all parties in the House voted for that.

• (1745)

Obviously, therefore, I am going to vote against banning asbestos.

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring two points to my colleague's attention to hear what he has to say about them.

First, during question period today, we heard the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup ask a question indicating that, with its safe use policy, the government is protecting corporations at the expense of workers and users.

Second, we heard the member for Newton—North Delta explain that in the 1970s, she lived near Thetford Mines and would find asbestos fibres in the snow when she was having snowball fights. God knows that there is a lot of snow in Thetford, but she found that appalling. So that is the debate we are having here today, which I personally find appalling. I would like to hear what the member for Richmond—Arthabaska has to say about this.

Mr. André Bellavance: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his comments.

I talked about myths related to chrysotile. First, we must stop being paternalistic with workers. Back home, Jeffrey mine workers are unionized with the CSD. It is in our community, in Asbestos, that there was a strike that left its mark on Quebec history, and workers do not want to be told that we feel sorry for them and that they are

sick. One should go and see them. One should go to their workplace to see that, when the Government of Canada, like the Quebec government, protects this industry, workers do not want to be told that they will lose their jobs and that they will get paid by the government, because they know there is a way to use chrysotile safely. However, this does not mean there are not places where it is not used properly, as can be the case with other products.

As for snowballs, I remind the Minister of Industry, who lives in Thetford Mines, that he himself looks pretty healthy. Surely he must have thrown some snowballs when he was young, yet he does not seem to be suffering because of it now.

• (1750)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier, the Bloc Québécois member said that people who used to work with asbestos do not all die of cancer caused by it. He is right in that respect, just as smokers do not all die from lung cancer. Earlier, I read a list of Quebec doctors who agree with us that asbestos should be banned.

Could the hon. Bloc Québécois member tell me whether all these doctors are mistaken? No doctor in Quebec knows anything about this? My list did not refer to doctors in geography. I was talking about medical doctors, about scientists. Are all medical doctors in Quebec mistaken?

Mr. André Bellavance: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

I am aware of that. That is why, earlier in my speech, I made a distinction between amphiboles and the various types of asbestos. That is why I quoted André Lalonde, who is a mineralogist and an ore expert. He is not a health specialist but a rock expert. Medical doctors cannot claim to be rock experts. That is what I said earlier.

There are various types of asbestos. We cannot lump them all together and say that this is asbestos, that there is no difference, because that is not true. Amphiboles are now banned. They can no longer be used. Chrysotile is the fibre now being used.

The U.S. Department of Health has made a list of hazardous products. I do not know whether there are any nickel mines in the member's riding, but there are in certain ridings and I know that a huge nickel mine is being planned in the Abitibi region. According to the U.S. Department of Health, nickel is much more toxic than chrysotile, because it ranks 53rd on its list, while chrysotile ranks 119th.

I could provide similar examples, such as lead, uranium, benzene and so on. There are many other products that we produce, export and send abroad, yet I have not heard the NDP speak against them.

[English]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

I thank the members for Nickel Belt and Winnipeg Centre for tabling this motion.

Business of Supply

I am especially glad to join in this debate today as this is an issue that I carry with me daily. A good friend of mine from the Mission, also known as Michipicoten Village in Wawa, Ontario, is currently struggling as her husband is battling mesothelioma, which many know is a type of cancer that can develop after being exposed to asbestos. I can say that this has been a battle that is defined more by questions than it is by answers. Watching these good people go through their search for appropriate care and treatment was a real eye-opener. I would never wish that on anyone and I certainly cannot support Canada exporting the root cause of their misery to other countries, which is what motivates me as I speak to this now.

In Canada, we understand how dangerous asbestos is. We have, for years, mitigated against the worst effects of this substance and sought to replace it when we know it has been used in homes and public buildings. We are a well-to-do western country with more than our share of resources, knowledge and, most important, public safety standards. However, the substance that we casually export is highly controlled here under the Hazardous Products Act. In fact, it is banned outright in 50 countries, including most developed countries, but we are supposed to believe that developing nations will manage to do an adequate job of utilizing this unique material and protecting those who work with it or, worse, do not much care what happens to people in other countries once we get payment.

It does not sound like the compassionate Canada that so many people have an image of, because it is not. We have recently witnessed the Canadian asbestos industry attempting to rehabilitate the substance in the public's eye, with the ultimate goal being government assistance to export even more of this dangerous product. The industry has gone so far as to misrepresent the World Health Organization's opinion on chrysotile asbestos, only to receive a strongly worded clarification from that governing body. It is difficult to comprehend.

As I watch my friends chase treatments and deal with bureaucracy, I can only imagine the millions of people around the globe who are not as fortunate. I use that term in a somewhat ironic sense. I mean fortunate enough to at least have options and the ability to travel all over the country and into the United States chasing down experimental treatments, but only for those who have money. There is no doubt that asbestos is useful for many things but so are other carcinogens that we control, avoid or even legislate against.

We should think of how quickly we moved on bisphenol A, which is found in plastic products and has been linked to various health conditions, including cancer. In that instance, Canada was a world leader. When announcing the ban of bisphenol A, the Minister of Health called the move precautionary and prudent. We cannot say the same about our policy on chrysotile asbestos can we?

In fact, I have heard members from the government side talk today about the need to protect the mining industry in Canada, instead of addressing the asbestos issue. I must point out that is not what we are debating today and the argument was a bit like someone defending agriculture in a debate about heroin production. It goes to show how much work we need to do to get through to members on the government bench.

I listened this morning as the member for Sarnia—Lambton gave a good account of why cosmetic contact lenses should be regulated

in Canada. The member asked parliamentarians to join together to support her bill and we are asking them to support our motion. In doing so, she claimed that Canada could reclaim the proper regulatory powers over the importers of contact lenses who so callously flood the Canadian market while doing untold damage to thousands of young Canadians' eyes, completely unbeknown to most consumers, unfortunately.

I cannot help but see the parallel between these debates today. The only difference is that, in this case, Canada is willing to look past health and safety. The government is totally invested in asbestos exports and is blocking international efforts to list asbestos on the UN's list of hazardous substances. It is fair to say that we should have the courage of our convictions for exports as well as imports.

• (1755)

I have received a fair bit of correspondence on this issue. In one message, I was alerted to a victims' group in the UK that had written to our Minister of Health in January 2010. It wrote asking her to ban asbestos and to better monitor the epidemic of asbestos-related diseases in Canada. The group did receive a reply but not from the Minister of Health. Instead, it heard from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, if we can believe that, who defended our asbestos exports. He told the group that Canada would continue to advocate for chrysotile under controlled conditions by contributing \$250,000 per year to the Chrysotile Institute, which was formerly called the Asbestos Institute.

We know that the asbestos industry has received 50 million in taxpayer dollars from Canada and Quebec since 1984. This is to promote a product that is so dangerous that West Block, one of the parliamentary buildings, had to be closed every time there was an incident that potentially shook fibres loose from the structure. The building is now closed for renovations, not the least of which is to remove altogether the asbestos that riddles the structure. It was built at a time when asbestos was seen as most beneficial. Today, we know better.

We need to ask ourselves a very pointed question here. If the members of Parliament of Canada were unwilling to work in an environment that was susceptible to trace elements of asbestos, how can we ask workers in India and Indonesia to expose themselves in what will likely be more dangerous environments? It is a fair question and one that I encourage the members who are still in support of asbestos exports to ask themselves.

Business of Supply

This brings us back to the motion we are debating today. It calls for a ban on the use and export of all forms of asbestos and a just transition plan for asbestos-producing workers and communities. It would be difficult, and we acknowledge as much, but it would not be anywhere as significant a shock as it would have been a few decades back. There just are not as many workers in the industry anymore. I will give some numbers. In 1991, 1,000 workers were employed in the asbestos mines in Quebec. Today, only 350 people work three to four months a year at Thetford Mines, which is also under bankruptcy protection and slated to close its gates this month.

This motion is not ill-conceived and New Democrats are acutely aware of the economic impact that banning exports would have. Many of my colleagues have spoken to that. We do not imagine that there would not be capital required for work force adjustment. We must be prepared to retain or relocate those miners who would be able to move on to other types of work and also be prepared to help workers who are closer to retirement, as well as the communities that would be affected by a change in direction as we are debating. It is the majority of the motion we are debating today and, as we see from the numbers I just cited, much of the adjustment in the work force historically associated with this industry has already taken place.

I am no stranger to this phenomenon. I know first-hand what happens when the mine closes and a town is forced to consider its future. That is the story of Elliot Lake. It is also the story of my family. The towns in Quebec that are reliant on asbestos can take heart from the way Elliot Lake has managed to reinvent itself in the aftermath of a large operation closure. There were hiccups but the town is known today as a retirement destination. The population is different. Some miners moved to other operations. Some stayed. Some are returning. However, at the end of the day, the sky did not fall and the town carried on.

For the families involved, there would be other work. Some would move to remain in mining and some would find other work. In the big picture, we need to recognize our position in the world and be aware that we are able to do something about this indiscriminate killer. With a simple change in policy, Canada would be able to reduce our role in millions of deaths worldwide. We have the riches needed to make a smooth transition for individuals and communities that would be affected by such a large change.

Members have heard all day that asbestos claims an estimated 100,000 lives around the world every year.

● (1800)

[Translation]

The World Health Organization has indicated that between 5 million and 10 million people will die from asbestos-related illnesses. That is a shame, and it is in large part Canada's shame. Canada must recognize its role in this tragedy and take some responsibility. We could certainly do worse than simply adopting this motion.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, throughout the day, I found myself wondering why we value some human lives so much more than others. We gathered in this place, all of us united, to focus on the threat to Coptic Christians who are being persecuted in Egypt. We went to war under a doctrine called

“responsibility to protect”. We saw 29 Coptic Christians murdered recently, and we rightly object. We see people at risk of dictators, and we rightly object.

Is it because the 100,000 people annually who are killed by asbestos are nameless to us that we will sell this poison globally? Is that why we do not care, in this country, to end this trade?

I would be grateful for the member's thoughts.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, I think the government of the day is not putting faces to the victims, which is extremely sad.

My friend writes me often to update me on her husband's case. They are tuned in right now. Julius' fight is our fight. He and his wife want to ensure that others need not to go through what they have gone through, attempting to seek treatment and having the door closed on them. They also want to ensure that the government stops exposing workers to this deadly substance. Martina is tireless in her attempts to get Julius the best care possible. It is a difficult task and she is well aware of the way the conditions play out, barring a miracle.

I just want to leave members with a couple of words as they consider their position on this motion. I truly hope that the members on the government side are listening, because they will not hear a better plea, at least in my opinion, than this.

● (1805)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the history of the Parliament with this issue has been one of movement. We have seen over the last six years that we have gone from where a vote in 2006 against the Chrysotile Institute had 10 supporters in the whole House of Commons, to a point now where I think the vast majority of people in this room recognize that we are not on the right track here. This is not a huge industry.

Would my colleague perhaps comment on how we are moving in that direction and that the government should recognize that and should respond in an appropriate fashion, not in the way that it responded quite recently on the international scene by being the odd person out on the whole issue of this?

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. There used to be a very few people who were onto this in the organization against the asbestos but now that number has grown by thousands, given the fact that 60% of all work-related deaths in Canada are related to asbestos exposure and, get this, a staggering 84% in Quebec. This is why we need to act.

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Just to add to that, I want give a bit more information I received in the message from my friend. She says, that “Canada is responsible for most of the deaths. Dying from cancer is a very frightening experience for the whole family and we can say today for part of the country that supports NDP and its well-known and dearly loved Jack Layton, this cancer caused by asbestos is actually given or, I can say, forced on the people by the Canadian government. Carol, my heart is dying knowing that my husband might not even live to be 57 years old, never mind to enjoy retirement”.

He worked for the federal government. It is just atrocious what is happening to them. It is really sad that he could not have access to treatment for this at an early stage.

She further says, “I ran out of options. All I am doing is watching my husband dying. It's not necessary. It did not and does not have to be this way”.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I call on the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île, I must inform her that I will have to interrupt her when the time provided for government orders has expired. I will let her know when she has one minute remaining.

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the NDP motion. To clarify certain things, this motion includes a plan to ban the export of asbestos and a plan to retrain workers in that industry and help them recover from the current crisis. In 1991, the asbestos industry employed about 1,500 workers in Thetford Mines. Today, there are only 350, who work three to four months a year. Right now, the asbestos industry is going through a crisis, because more and more countries are banning asbestos. They no longer want it. Indeed, some 50 countries have already banned it, but Canada is not one of them. We are the only country, the only western power, the only western democracy that is dead set against declaring asbestos a hazardous product.

In 1998, Canada banned the use of asbestos in everything, including buildings, but we continue to export it to countries that have less stringent occupational health and safety standards or building codes. If the hon. member thinks this is not the case, then why is the government spending millions of dollars to remove asbestos from buildings if it is not banned and it is not dangerous?

Since this morning, the government has been repeating over and over that its budget is fantastic, that it provides tons of money to create jobs. However, it is totally silent on the asbestos industry. We should talk about it here. The government has subsidized 160 trade delegations to 60 countries to promote asbestos. It has spent money to promote asbestos. Why not use that money to establish a subsidy fund for older workers in that industry and to diversify our economy, so that it is not based on products that kill 100,000 people every year?

Canada has no shortage of natural resources. Our economy is not based only on asbestos. I will not let the government tell Canadians that the NDP is opposed to the mining industry. That is not true. I remind the House of what the hon. member for Newton—North Delta repeated: just because we oppose a product that is dangerous for Canadians and for everyone else in the world does not mean we are necessarily opposed to products that are not dangerous.

I am not going to get technical, but there are alternative materials. The government could take the money that it is spending on lobbyists and on trade missions, not to mention the \$250,000 given in each of the past three years to the Chrysotile Institute, and invest it in alternative energies. We know that such alternatives exist and the hon. member should know it too.

In Thetford Mines, 350 people work three to four months per year. It would be very easy to take the millions of dollars that were spent and create a subsidy fund to allow these workers to recover from the crisis and retire in dignity. In doing so, we would also diversify our economy. We know that diversifying the economy is something very important for the Conservatives. Here is a solution for the government: to invest in alternative energies and materials, and to set up a subsidy fund for asbestos workers.

Yet, today I did not hear any Conservative member propose a solution. The government only told us that its economic recovery budget was fantastic and that it had created 600,000 jobs, but it said nothing about asbestos.

• (1810)

NDP members rose on many occasions to call government members to order and tell them that their speeches were not relevant to the motion before the House.

We are not asking the government to merely ban asbestos, but to invest and subsidize people. We are asking the government not only to do that, but to also take the money that it gives to large corporations and lobbyists, the money it uses to send delegations abroad. The government is spending millions of dollars annually. It should take that money and give it to Canadians rather than to large corporations. It should take that money and give it to those Canadians who need it.

I am going to conclude by saying that even Health Canada has refuted the claim made by the Conservatives to the effect that asbestos can be used safely. That is absolutely false. Even the official opposition in Quebec is asking the provincial government to set up a parliamentary committee to look at the effects of asbestos on health, because it is worried.

• (1815)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. It being 6:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The vote stands deferred until tomorrow at the end of government orders.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I ask that you see the clock at 6:30 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

SERVICE CANADA

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on September 20 I raised two questions in the House. One was to do with the fact that the Conservative government was spending \$90,000 a day for an outside consultant to plan cuts to the Service Canada operation. Subsequently, I asked a question about the cuts to services at EI processing centres and what kind of impact that would have on Canadians. We have asked this question a number of times in the House and still have not received a satisfactory answer, so once again I am here raising the issue.

There are a number of questions that have come up, including the fact that there does not appear to be any kind of analysis or detailed analysis that is available to the public on the impact on services to the public and to the affected communities.

As well, when we are talking about Service Canada, we are not just talking about the processing of employment insurance claims, we are also talking about claims that involve payments for maternity leave, sick leave and compassionate leave.

The minister, on a number of occasions, has talked about the need for automation. What she has failed to tell the House is that the ability to apply has now been automated for five years, but that less than 50% of the claims are fully automated. The balance of those claims require some sort of involvement from an employee. Even a tiny anomaly on an EI claim requires a staff person to become involved. That ensures the person who filed a claim in many cases does not get his or her cheque within 28 days, which is part of the speed of service processing that Service Canada has committed to.

There are also some troubling statistics with regard to the kind of service when people need an answer about the delay on their claim. In September the abandoned rate for calls for EI has increased in the call centres. In two centres, Vancouver and Winnipeg, nearly one in

every three employment insurance calls was abandoned in the last week of September. That means people call and they cannot get information about whether or not they can expect a cheque to pay their bills.

Over half of employment insurance callers are being told that their call cannot be transferred due to high volume. In the last week of September half of all CPP and OAS callers got a busy signal when they tried to call. They could not even connect with the interactive voice response system, so one has to wonder when Canadians are getting that quality of service, obviously the minister has not explained to Canadians what the impact of the cuts will be.

Why is the automated system still rejecting over 50% of the claims? Where is the Service Canada and HRSDC business case for closing all of the offices and laying off staff? Why is the government moving its operations from areas where office space is inexpensive to large urban centres where rental rates are considerably higher? With technology, workers no longer need to be centralized in urban centres. There are a number of points here that Canadians will be very interested in hearing from the parliamentary secretary.

● (1820)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased once again to respond to the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan on her concerns about providing services to out of work Canadians.

I will begin by dealing with an issue that has been in the news a significant amount lately, the fact that Service Canada is not renewing the contracts of some 330 temporary employees.

Service Canada must deliver services efficiently and effectively. To do this it must ensure that its workforce is aligned with its operational needs. It is the nature of our business that our needs vary from season to season and from year to year, which is why we need the flexibility of using temporary workers.

These 330 employees were hired for a specific length of time during the economic downturn to help us cope with the surge in applications for employment insurance. They were hired for a specific period of time. This was indicated on their contracts. There was no promise expressed or implied that their contracts would be renewed at the end of their term.

As members know, our government has made a commitment to reduce both its spending and its size. Our government is working toward eliminating the deficit and returning to balanced budgets while continually improving services delivered to Canadians.

We know that Canadians want efficient government that gives them good value for their hard-earned tax dollars. It is our job to make sure Canadian taxpayer dollars are used wisely. Canadians expect no less from their government. That is why we are moving forward with the next phase of the EI modernization initiative which began in 2005.

Adjournment Proceedings

Service Canada will continue to modernize the delivery of EI by automating its processing, consolidating its processing sites, and managing its workload more efficiently. Automation has already made EI processing more accurate and has resulted in significant savings. In fact, thanks to automation, the EI processing costs have been reduced by almost 30% since 2003.

In addition, the workforce management strategy is in effect to assist with planned personnel changes. This will include attrition, reassignments and training. All changes will occur within the parameters of the collective agreements.

Processing no longer needs to be done in a paper-based system. With our new technology and workload distribution system, an EI claimant can have his or her file processed electronically by the next available agent in any processing centre anywhere in the country. This saves time for everyone and money for Canadian taxpayers.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, there is one point on which the parliamentary secretary and I would agree, which is that unemployed workers would like to see their claims processed efficiently and effectively.

We find that because of Service Canada's planned reductions in workers who deliver these services, it is not able to process these claims effectively and efficiently. We have seen that when the government cannot meet the speed of service targets, it changes the targets. It used to be that when people called to get information about their claim, Service Canada had 48 hours to provide the information. Now the target has been moved to five days.

Unemployed Canadians rely on their EI cheques to pay their bills. There is an impact on communities and small businesses. Could the parliamentary secretary explain the impact of these proposed service cuts on communities? What is the impact to unemployed Canadians who are relying on this money to pay their bills?

• (1825)

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, the way in which EI claims are currently processed is out of date. In 2007-08, we began to consolidate our EI processing sites for greater efficiency. Over the next three years, EI processing will be consolidated into 22 regional sites. We will ease the transition to a smaller workforce through attrition, reassignment and training. Affected employees will be considered for other positions.

The modernization at Service Canada will give Canadians in every region of the country better access to employment insurance and a host of other Government of Canada services. We will all benefit from this.

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are here tonight to discuss the topic of graduate unemployment and underemployment. Back in September a report was released showing that Canadian university graduates are being shut out of the job market at an alarming rate.

This report showed that a whopping one in five Canadian graduates is employed in a position that pays at the lower end of the income scale. This means that 20% of our university graduates are earning an income of less than the national median of \$37,000. This

income is not very much. Too many of our Canadian new graduates are living below the poverty line.

These findings mean that Canada has the highest proportion of poor university graduates of any of the OECD countries. While the majority of Canadian graduates do earn more than non-university graduates over the course of their lifetime, this report reveals that for far too many of our graduates, their degree is not worth their investment in both time and money. This is not right. We are talking about our best and brightest here. Instead of helping to strengthen our economy, their degrees and skills are being wasted.

I asked a question on this topic on September 27. Unfortunately, when I asked this question, the minister did not rise and talk about what the government is doing to actually create more jobs and create more opportunities for the most educated in our country. No, instead, the minister stood up and spoke about tax credits.

How do tax credits help graduates find jobs? What good is a tax credit if they do not have jobs? What message are we sending to our university graduates when after spending years and thousands of dollars on earning a degree, they are forced into jobs that are greatly below their education standard?

We know that our university grads are getting jobs at the low end of the income scale. What message are we sending to our youth when the only jobs available to them are part-time or shift work? What hope for tomorrow do we give to these people?

This is a question that I am often asked on the doorsteps in my constituency. My riding is one of the poorest in the GTA, yet many of the families that live there are spending their life savings or incurring extreme amounts of debt to send their children to school, only to then have their children graduate and not be able to find jobs or they find severely underpaying jobs.

While these graduates do not have well-paying jobs, the one thing we know they have for sure is debt. On average, Canadian students are graduating with a debt load of over \$25,000, and tuition fees, unfortunately, continue to rise at four times the rate of inflation.

Getting a degree is not getting any cheaper, and now these graduates do not have jobs to look forward to to help them pay back their student loans. The fact that the cost for post-secondary education is rising coupled with low job prospects may in turn deter Canadians from pursuing post-secondary education. Many Canadians may decide that the debt associated with pursuing post-secondary studies is just not worth it.

If the government is as serious as it says it is about securing Canada's economic future, it would make a commitment to education. If it was really concerned with Canada's economic recovery, it would create real jobs and real opportunities for our nation's best and brightest.

Adjournment Proceedings

Many youth and graduates in my constituency and across the country cannot find work at all. What are we saying to these people who are already marginalized because of their age, ethnicity, status in the country, and their household income? What are we telling them? Are we telling them that they are not worth planning for? Why not provide our graduates and our youth with a sense of importance and value? Why not provide them with opportunities, like jobs and access to post-secondary education?

Why not give them hope? On this side of the House, that is what we believe in. Our university graduates need jobs. They need real jobs that will help them make ends meet, that will help them support their families, that will help them and their children lead better lives. This is what we have been fighting for on this side of the House. We have been asking the government for a real economic recovery plan. We have been asking the government for real action on unemployment and underemployment.

I will ask my question again tonight, when will the government stop the inaction and come forward with a real jobs plan, with real opportunities for Canadian graduates?

• (1830)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss Canada's economy and outline our Conservative government's record in helping create jobs and supporting Canadian students.

First and foremost, our Conservative government is squarely focused on what matters to Canadians, helping create jobs and promoting economic growth.

As Statistics Canada announced today, Canada's economy grew yet again in August. That is positive news, along with the fact that approximately 650,000 net new jobs have been created since July 2009. It is an encouraging sign that our government is on the right track for the economy and hard-working families.

Indeed, on the job creation front, Canada has an enviable record when compared to other G7 countries. Canada has posted the strongest employment growth in the G7 since mid-2009, and of those approximately 650,000 net new jobs created since July 2009, over 90% have been full-time and nearly 80% have been in the private sector.

For the benefit of the NDP member, I draw her attention to the September 2011 OECD employment outlook for an independent assessment of Canada's job market. The report states:

—the labour market is recovering faster in Canada than in many OECD countries...Canada's long-term unemployment is among the lowest in the OECD, suggesting that job prospects have remained fairly positive—

Nevertheless, we recognize the global recovery is fragile, especially in the United States and Europe, and equally as important, too many Canadians, especially our young people, are still looking for work.

That is why we are working and focused on implementing the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, including its key steps to help Canadian students and youth succeed in the global economy with the help of the best education possible.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes several smart and targeted steps to help students and youth in their education and support as they need it, such as: the student loan forgiveness for doctors and nurses working in rural and remote areas; extending tax relief for skills certification exams, to make all occupational, trade and professional exam fees eligible for tax relief through the tuition tax credit; doubling the in-study income exemption from \$50 per week to \$100 per week, benefiting over 100,000 students by allowing them to work more without negatively affecting their income; reducing the in-study interest rate for part-time Canadian student loan recipients; increasing the family income threshold for part-time Canada loans and Canada student grant recipients, bringing the eligibility thresholds in line with the thresholds for full-time students; and providing \$20 million to help the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to support young entrepreneurs.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan is working. I encourage the NDP to support the next phase of Canada's action plan and these significant initiatives for students.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, the government can talk all it wants about legislation it has passed, tax credits it has implemented, and making more debt available for students, but at the end of the day, the government has not really helped our graduates. How does a tax credit actually help an individual find a job? It does not.

We have our best and brightest working at jobs that are significantly lower than their education level. This is not because these people are not looking hard enough. This is because these jobs just do not exist, and the creation of more precarious part-time jobs are not the types of jobs that our university graduates are looking for.

What does the government not understand about this? I do not understand what the government does not understand. We need real jobs for our graduates and for all Canadians. We need good jobs. We need full-time permanent jobs, not more precarious ones.

Why will the government not act to support our nation's graduates and why will it not create a real job plan with tangible opportunities for Canada's graduates?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: As I mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan contains many positive measures for Canadian youth, measures that the NDP and the member opposite unfortunately voted against.

I suggest the NDP members talk to important groups about their assessment of the plan and reconsider their opposition. They should talk to organizations like the National Association of Career Colleges who said about the plan:

Students were hoping for positive news from the government, and this government has delivered. The government's proposal will allow more students to access post-secondary education training.

Adjournment Proceedings

While our Conservative government has focused on jobs, economic growth and helping youth, the NDP is disappointingly opposed to our plan, and instead is focused on tax increases on families and employers.

● (1835)

G8 SUMMIT

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I posed a question back on October 5 to the President of the Treasury Board. He has not risen to answer any questions with respect to G8 spending.

Fifty million dollars was spent out of the border infrastructure fund. The money that was spent in the minister's riding really had nothing to do with the border infrastructure fund, so that money should not really have been spent in the minister's riding. That \$50 million was spent on projects that did not qualify to come out of that particular fund. I have to question the government's priorities when it spent \$50 million from the border infrastructure fund and cut \$56 million from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

The Auditor General said that "rules were broken" with respect to how that \$50 million was spent. When the Minister of Foreign Affairs stands to defend the President of the Treasury Board, he always responds by saying that the government is paying attention to what the Auditor General had to say. It is all well and good for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to say that, but in reality \$50 million was spent on projects for which the money was not intended.

When I look at what the government is doing in terms of cutting \$56 million from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, all I can do is shake my head and think that the government has it all wrong. It is spending money from the border infrastructure fund on projects that should never have been approved under that fund, while at the same time it is cutting \$56 million from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, thereby cutting services and safety. That is such an important department in terms of a renewable resource. As an example, cutting the marine sub-centres in St. John's and Quebec will impact on the safety of anyone who goes on the ocean, not just fishers.

The government is also making cuts to the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council, the very body that takes science into account, that takes the input of fishers—the people with the experience—into account, and takes the industry into account. The government is cutting from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans something that is vitally important to the future of our country. It is extremely important to the future of people not just in Newfoundland and Labrador, but the entire country. We are talking about a renewable resource.

Because the government had spent this money without any approval and because there was some suggestion that the RCMP was investigating the legality of how that money had been spent, I put my question to the minister. I asked him if he or any of his former staff had been approached by the RCMP. I raise the question now to the parliamentary secretary, because I did not get an answer: has the minister and/or his former staff been approached by the RCMP about the legality of how the money out of the border infrastructure fund was spent?

● (1840)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is like the movie *Groundhog Day*: I am back again. Hopefully, I am getting better at this. I thank the member for her question.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to respond to the question posed by the hon. member for Random—Burin—St. George's. The G8 legacy fund was an investment in public infrastructure that has benefited the region and its communities while supporting the G8 summit. The fund improved tourism and recreational facilities; upgraded sidewalks, parks and lighting; and ensured safer highways for residents in the region. Residents and visitors to the region will be able to take advantage of these improvements well into the future.

As well as leaving a legacy to the region, these projects also contributed to Canada's successful hosting of the G8 summit in Huntsville. The Muskoka region was responsible for hosting the 2010 summit and needed to be ready to showcase Canada to international guests and media, such as heads of state, senior dignitaries and countless delegates from the world's leading countries.

While supporting Canada's hosting role, the intent of the fund was also to provide a legacy to the communities and the people in the region. This has traditionally been the case when Canada hosts such high-profile international events. Similar events were completed in Vancouver, Kananaskis, Quebec City, Moncton and Halifax. Hosting an international event of this scale in the Muskoka-Parry Sound region was important for Canada. The G8 legacy fund helped the region prepare for and host the international delegations, showcasing our beautiful country to the world.

The Auditor General reported that Infrastructure Canada worked to ensure that every G8 legacy project met the program's conditions. All of these projects were identified by municipalities and the province as a local priority. They provided lasting benefits to their communities and contributed to a successfully hosted G8 summit. Every dollar was spent on eligible costs for approved public infrastructure projects. The Auditor General reviewed this program and made a number of important observations and recommendations for improvement. We have been clear that we have accepted this report and its findings.

Hosting the G8 summit put Canada on the world stage, and the G8 legacy fund helped in making it successful.

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, it would appear that I am not going to get the answer from the parliamentary secretary any more than I got an answer from the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The reality is, rules were broken. That is the problem I have with how this money from the border infrastructure fund was spent. It certainly was not meant to be spent in Muskoka, and it certainly was not meant to be spent without the approval of Parliament, which is exactly what happened.

Adjournment Proceedings

The problem I have with all of this is that the government can stand and talk about how the money was spent, acknowledge that the Auditor General said that rules were broken, and then turn around and treat areas of this country with such total lack of respect in terms of what needs to be done to keep the country going and to make viable options. For instance, through an agency like the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, we know that cutting to the tune of \$56 million will have a devastating impact on the people who make a living from the fishery. Why in the name of Heaven the government would cut the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council and at the same time turn around and invest money in things like a fake lighthouse and fake lakes is beyond me. It does not make sense. Why is the government not recognizing the importance of putting money where it counts, instead of doing things that the Auditor General says was breaking the rules?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, the G8 legacy fund helped the region prepare for hosting the 2010 G8 summit and provided a legacy to the region. Tourism infrastructure was renovated, a new University of Waterloo Summit Centre for the Environment was constructed, roads were upgraded and community infrastructure was improved in towns throughout the region. These

projects meant a successful hosting of the summit, and residents as well as visitors to the region continue to benefit from these projects.

The Auditor General found that all 32 projects met the program's terms and conditions. She found that officials maintained project records and established frameworks to deliver the programs with due diligence. Every dollar was spent on eligible costs for eligible projects.

The summit, like other previous international meetings held in Canada, was an important occasion for our country to present itself to the world. Every project was completed in time for the summit, contributing to this great opportunity for our country.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): 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 6:45 p.m.)

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