



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, September 27, 2005

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, September 27, 2005

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

BROME—MISSISQUOI

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, almost 100 representatives of organizations from Brome—Missisquoi and surrounding areas had an opportunity to speak at regional meetings I organized in Orford with colleagues from this House and the other place.

I want to thank all the organizations and businesses that took part. I will mention a few: Abattoir Campbell, Conservation Baie Missisquoi, Conservation Memphrémagog, Iwana Farm, Brome Fair, Brome-Missisquoi RCM, the Magog revitalization committee, the Bedford business association, the Memphrémagog CLD, Tourism Eastern Townships, the Magog-Orford Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Cowansville Chamber of Commerce, the Kirkland and Venise beaches, the municipality of Venise-en-Québec, the textile workers, the CSD, the CSN, the roundtable on homelessness, the Maison des jeunes de Sutton, the Corporation Jeunesse Memphrémagog, Découvertes de la chanson de Magog, Festiv'Art and the Saint-Armand world film festival.

To all those who came and told us about their needs and concerns, I say that I stand behind them.

* * *

• (1405)

[*English*]

TASTE OF AUTUMN

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, October 21 the Rotary Clubs of Orangeville are holding their 11th annual fundraiser “A Taste of Autumn”. This event takes place at the Hockley Valley Resort and features a terrific seven course dinner prepared by chefs from some of the finest restaurants in Dufferin—Caledon. These restaurants include the Mono Cliff's Inn, the Millcroft Inn, the Cataract Inn, One 99 Restaurant, Hockley Valley Resort and Whitefield Farm.

A silent auction will be held throughout the evening and a live auction will take place around 9 p.m. These auctions have helped raised over \$1 million in support of local community projects and international charitable programs. Headwaters Health Care Centre and Rotary's Centennial Project, as well as other Orangeville and Shelburne area causes, are just some of the organizations that have benefited from “A Taste of Autumn”.

For a sensational evening in Dufferin—Caledon this October 21, the place to be is “A Taste of Autumn”.

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[*Translation*]

EVANGELOS HADJIS

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Evangelos Hadjis on September 10. His death is a loss for me and the Hellenic community in Montreal, and for everyone in Quebec society, for we have lost one of our most distinguished and respected members.

Evangelos Hadjis was an exemplary brother, husband, father and friend.

[*English*]

Since coming to Canada in 1955, Evangelos was both a mentor and a protector. A member of the Bar of Quebec, Evangelos distinguished himself as a lawyer. He was widely respected by his colleagues in the legal community, yielding great influence through his keen sense of justice, power of negotiation and generosity of spirit.

Ever mindful of his roots, Evangelos served his fellow Greeks and their various organizations for over 40 years with dedication, dignity and humility. He was recognized as a leader and pillar of strength by one and all. No less genuine was his pride in being Canadian. This was exemplified by both word and deed in moments of national debate.

[*Member spoke in Greek and provided the following translation:*]

[*Translation*]

May your memory be eternal, dear friend, and may the ground that covers you be light.

S. O. 31

[Translation]

250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEPORTATION OF THE ACADIANS

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this past July 28, monuments were unveiled, and the Acadian tricolour flag with its star was lowered to half mast in Acadia, Quebec, Louisiana and Canada to commemorate the 250th anniversary of a tragic event, the deportation of the Acadians.

I feel it is essential as Parliament resumes to invite my colleagues to pay solemn tribute to the victims of that historic tragedy, and to their brave descendants who, by their mere presence and their vitality, are a moving reminder of that first Acadia, which no longer exists because of the rivalries and greed of the colonial powers.

The deportation of the Acadians had but one goal: the disappearance of this courageous and ingenious people with its vibrant culture. That culture is, however, still alive and flourishing today, far beyond the confines of the now defunct Acadia.

The only thing that remains to be done is for the British Crown to take the noble step of acknowledging these undeniable facts, so that this tragic page in the history of the Acadian people can at last be turned.

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[English]

SIMON WIESENTHAL

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently the world lost a truly great man with the passing of Simon Wiesenthal. Simon Wiesenthal was responsible for bringing to justice over 1,100 war criminals who might otherwise have avoided being brought to account for their crimes.

This past summer I had the opportunity to visit the Yad Vashem memorial to those who died in the Holocaust. One has only to spend a brief moment at the Yad Vashem memorial to understand just how important Simon Wiesenthal's work was to the world.

As a Holocaust survivor himself, Simon Wiesenthal ensured that the memory of those who died was honoured by his efforts to hold those responsible to account. His work, as well as the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, will continue to live on as a tribute to his remarkable life.

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●(1410)

JUSTICE

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Newton—North Delta, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, I was joined by the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells and thousands of others in a candlelight vigil in memory of 82-year-old Mewa Singh Bains and 76-year-old Shingara Singh Thandi, two men who died in separate attacks while visiting Bear Creek Park in Surrey.

Apparently the seniors were beaten with a baseball bat by two young offenders, aged 13 and 15.

Those gathered Saturday night demanded justice and tough penalties for the guilty.

The Liberal government has done nothing to cut crime in our community. Our streets, parks and homes are not safe. We need minimum mandatory sentences for violent crimes, truth in sentencing and more resources for law enforcement. Hate crimes resulting from ignorance must be eliminated through proper education.

These heinous crimes should serve as a wake-up call for the Liberals. The government must stop pressing the snooze button and protect our senior citizens and other citizens now.

* * *

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Hon. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my voice to the many Canadians who deplore the lengthy lockout that has deprived them of their cherished CBC radio and television programs.

I have heard loud and clear that my constituents want this lockout settled.

I too miss my favourites such as *Metro Morning*, *Cross Country Checkup*, *As it Happens*, *The National* and of course, politics and the House.

At a time like this it is also instructive to appreciate the importance of the CBC and why it fills such a critical need in our country's culture. It is a lifeline enabling our cultural stories and ideas to be conveyed from coast to coast to coast.

I call upon the CBC management and the guild to reach an agreement and quickly resume the services that Canadians so greatly miss.

This lockout is not just another labour dispute. It is about an essential service that Canadians want and need.

* * *

[Translation]

MICHEL CUSSON

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am particularly proud to bring to your attention the prolific talent of Quebec and Drummondville's own composer, Michel Cusson.

He has seen his dream of composing film scores come true, starting with *L'Automne sauvage* in 1992, and now has worked on 16 feature films and 13 television series.

After writing the score for *Séraphin: Heart of Stone*, Michel Cusson composed some twenty original musical pieces for the soundtrack of *Aurore*.

He was also responsible for the music used in the film on the life of Maurice Richard.

He has done a lot of travelling back and forth between Quebec and China recently. In fact, the music accompanying the performance of the Shanghai Circus—premiering today, incidentally—is also his work.

Michel, the Bloc Québécois is impressed by the broad scope and the high calibre of your work and hope it will continue to brighten our lives for many years to come.

S. O. 31

[English]

HIV-AIDS

Hon. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, I was joined by many of my hon. colleagues of the House and Senate as part of a Canadian delegation to Senegal.

We took part in the third policy dialogue organized by the Parliamentary Centre with African and Canadian parliamentarians. The focus was on the issue of HIV-AIDS, especially the issue of generic drugs and medication.

We had a very successful exchange in which we discussed best practices and the methods to engage civil society.

African parliamentarians expressed their support for the manufacturing and distribution of generic antiretroviral drugs.

Let me remind the House that as Canadian parliamentarians we need to ensure that the Jean Chrétien pledge to Africa is implemented so that we can help alleviate the unnecessary suffering and loss of lives as a result of the carnage of HIV-AIDS.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently the Leader of the Conservative Party travelled to the heart of the massive pine beetle disaster in British Columbia to announce a \$1 billion federal aid package that would allow the province to fully implement its 10 year pine beetle action plan.

He did that because he recognizes the disaster that has hit the forest industry and communities in B.C. He did that because he recognizes the importance of the forest industry of B.C. and the rest of the country. He did that because he recognizes the importance of the province of B.C. to the rest of Canada. He announced a \$1 billion pine beetle package and under a Conservative government that will be delivered.

British Columbians have long grown tired of ambivalence that the Prime Minister and his Liberal government have continually showed to them. They are tired of the federal Liberals demonstrating that B.C. just is not on their agenda.

B.C. is ready for a Conservative government and a new Prime Minister, Stephen Harper.

● (1415)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George is an experienced member and he knows that he has to refer to other hon. members by their title. I am sure he meant the Leader of the Opposition and I am sure he regrets not having said that.

The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

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[Translation]

FRANCO-ONTARIAN FLAG

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Sunday, Franco-Ontarians celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Franco-Ontarian flag. This emblem of our French-

speaking community was officially unveiled on September 25, 1975, at Laurentian University. Since then, it has been proudly flown throughout the province.

In 2001, artists in my riding officially launched the song, “Mon beau drapeau”, a tribute to the Franco-Ontarian community and its flag. This week, throughout my riding, students will join together to proudly sing these optimistic verses.

Je te chante, mon beau drapeau
Des Français de l'Ontario,
Je te lève, brandi bien haut,
Pour que vous voyiez bien
Que je suis Franco-Ontarien

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seven weeks ago, CBC management unilaterally pulled the plug on the Canadian conversation. In doing so, they have undermined the credibility of the CBC, they have gambled recklessly with their audience base and they have reopened the debate about whether we need a national broadcaster at all.

Where is the heritage minister been on this file? She has been missing in action.

This is not about a labour battle. It is about a cultural policy adrift. This past summer, for example, the CRTC satellite radio decision overturned the fundamental principles of Cancon.

The minister and cabinet had the power to act but they did nothing while the airwaves were handed over to Nashville and Los Angeles. For God's sake, someone get the defibrillators. Our nation's cultural policy is on life support and an IV drip of Liberal platitudes will not bring the patient back.

* * *

YEAR OF THE VETERAN

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, I had the extraordinary privilege of hosting a reception in honour of 16 remarkable women at the Royal Canadian Legion in the town Lancaster in my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

These women are all war veterans and incredibly all 16 live in the small community of South Glengarry. They served in World War II, both at home and abroad, in all three services, army, navy and air force. They performed a wide variety of roles, including some that broke new ground for women of that era.

Oral Question Period

All of Canada is indebted to these women for the sacrifices they made, the service they provided and the hardship they endured. They overcame the greatest challenges in our history and forged a brighter future for Canadian women and for Canada as a whole.

I was humbled and deeply grateful to be able to pay tribute to these heroic women in this the Year of the Veteran. Let us never forget the sacrifices that our veterans have made and may we never have to relive them.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, protecting the environment is a real priority for Quebeckers. The same cannot be said of ministers in Ottawa.

How can the Minister of the Environment preach about fighting pollution, when departmental chauffeurs needlessly leave the motor running in front of the Parliament buildings? How can he ask people to do more than what he demands of the biggest industrial polluters and federal ministers?

Leaving cars idling is a waste of fuel, and it creates more pollution, all because the Liberal ministers want to stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

The ministers should lead by example. There should be strict rules about idling, including for departmental cars.

* * *

● (1420)

[English]

GASOLINE PRICES

Ms. Bev Oda (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this summer I saw how gas tax prices were affecting those in my riding.

Recently the De Young family, a large chicken producer, told me that last year their fuel costs were \$90,000 and this year they would almost be \$120,000.

In Durham we need to drive to work and we need to drive for work. Seniors on fixed incomes, already challenged with the rising costs, are limiting their activities that require driving. In rural areas of Canada there are no public transit alternatives.

We call on the Liberals to immediately end charging GST on top of fuel taxes at the pump. This measure would effectively recognize the level of one's use and the need for fuel in the daily lives of those in rural communities.

While the government dithers and studies its options, I say that the government has an obvious option for today. We will continue to press for the stopping of fuel tax on gasoline.

* * *

CP RAIL

Mr. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on August 1, 2005, Canadian Pacific Railway issued a

memo that indicated that all truck drivers must wear a hard hat when entering CP Rail property or else face suspension.

This zero tolerance policy affects hundreds of Sikh truck drivers who have worked without a hard hat for many years. By requiring Sikh men to wear a hard hat, CP Rail is asking them to remove an essential article of their faith, the turban.

CP Rail is attempting to implement a safety policy where safety concerns are minimal and I believe this policy is in violation of the freedom of religion.

Under Canadian law there has been a well developed history of charter cases which has established that any violation of a person's freedom of religion must be balanced, proportionate and justifiable. In this case, CP Rail's zero tolerance policy on hard hats is not balanced, not proportionate and definitely not justifiable.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

JUSTICE

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I told the Prime Minister that the families of the four slain RCMP officers were in Ottawa to make a passionate plea for criminal justice reform. The Prime Minister told the House in response that he had "met the families and had long discussions".

The families told us afterwards that no such discussions took place; they were in the gallery. I am wondering why the Prime Minister would mislead the families and mislead the House in this fashion.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition knows he cannot suggest that a member misled the House.

An hon. member: He did not say "deliberately".

The Speaker: I am aware that he did not say "deliberately". I am well aware of that, but in asking a question of this sort I think it is even less discreet. I see the Prime Minister is rising to answer, so we will treat the question as referring to the family and not to the House.

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I said that I was in Alberta. I was there for the memorial. I met with each of the families at that time. I met with them individually and discussed this.

This was a terrible, terrible event and, as I said yesterday, it was one that was very, very emotional, certainly for me and for everyone else. I did have discussions with each family in Alberta at that time. That is a matter of public record.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a brief condolence at a reception does not constitute a long and serious discussion. I can tell the Prime Minister that the families certainly do not consider that they have had any such kind of meeting or discussion with the Prime Minister.

Oral Question Period

Regardless of how we choose to phrase it, I can assure the Prime Minister that these families are deeply upset and feel deeply misled. Will he apologize to them?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really do not believe that it is appropriate for the hon. member to try to make this kind of political gamesmanship on such an emotional event. I am prepared to meet with the families again. I would be more than happy to sit down with any member of any one of the four families who would like to discuss this with me.

If I had known that they were here and wanted to meet with me yesterday, I would have been delighted to do so. I would be delighted to do so today, but surely to heaven this is not the kind of issue that the hon. member ought to try to play politics with.

● (1425)

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the families have told us they want us to raise this in the House today and I am proud to do it on their behalf.

I am told also that the Prime Minister was asked to meet with the families yesterday and chose not to do that, but I will at least ask the Prime Minister this question. Is he at least prepared to listen to the families and make the changes to the law they want to have made by this government?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the families asked to meet with me yesterday, I was not aware of it. I am more than happy to meet with the families. I will meet with them today if they are still here or I will meet with them at a future time at their convenience. The fact is that I would be delighted to sit down with them individually.

This was a terrible event and a terribly moving ceremony. I think that at this point what we really ought to understand is the necessity to deal with the fundamental issues in place, and I believe the government is in the process of discussing that very thing, but for heaven's sake, do not play politics with this.

Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is not about politics. I just got off the phone with one of the families. I was with the families yesterday all day long. I brought them to question period and they sat in the gallery. They heard the Prime Minister say that he met with them at their most difficult hour and had long discussions with them. He did not have any long discussions with them.

Yesterday the families were very hurt by the Prime Minister's words. Will the Prime Minister apologize to the families?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we think of what these families went through and we think of the tremendous loss, obviously anything I could do to reach out to these people, whether it is an apology on my own behalf or anything I could do to make them understand our deep concern as a people, I would be more than delighted to do.

Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the families came to Ottawa for action and change and they should be commended for their passion and commitment to the memory of their murdered sons. They came here full of first-hand experience and ideas to share with Parliament, the Prime Minister and Canadians.

What specific action is the Prime Minister taking to help prevent this type of tragedy from happening again?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure everyone in this House that I have indeed talked to the families, but in particular Reverend Schiemann. Reverend Schiemann came to my office in Edmonton a month ago. He and I spent well over an hour together, talking about the work the families are in fact doing.

I have talked to my colleague, the Minister of Justice, about the concerns raised by Reverend Schiemann on behalf of the families. I have given my assurance and the assurance of the Attorney General that we will sit down with the families and we will work together with them to see how we can make sure this tragedy does not happen again.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister made comments that were disjointed, to say the least, on how his government intends to help consumers cope with the spike in gas prices. He talked about buying medical and recreational equipment, but that will not do much to help consumers when it comes time to fill their gas tanks.

Instead of saying things that are totally disconnected from reality, can the Prime Minister put specific measures in place that will help consumers right now?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that cities and municipalities will receive up to 50% of the gas tax. This money will be invested in infrastructure, drinking water, and public transit. That is precisely the type of investment we should be making to get through a crisis like this.

● (1430)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am all for investing in drinking water, but so far cars still run on gas. This causes a slight problem for taxi drivers, truckers and low-income families who are hit hard by this crisis.

The Bloc Québécois has proposed measures that could be implemented immediately and would meet the specific needs of consumers and workers.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Could he propose such measures soon? There are people hard hit by this and, what is more, winter is coming.

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ministers and the government are hard at work on this issue. We understand the concern of consumers. We understand particularly the needs of low income Canadians. We do intend to act. We intend to act as quickly as possible.

Oral Question Period

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand people are paying far too much for gas, and on the other hand, oil companies are predicting record profits, since they took advantage of the increase in the price of crude oil to increase their refining profits considerably.

How can the government justify reducing taxes on the oil industry a year ago by \$250 million, when industry profits increase markedly year after year?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is confusing and muddling a number of quite different things. I would simply suggest to him that I am not sure in the present context of consumer markets that a tax increase is the appropriate response.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the current context, real social justice would mean taking more money from the obscene profits of the oil industry, and giving it to the victims of overpriced gasoline.

Will the minister not agree that his government should announce an immediate surtax of at least \$500 million on oil industry profits and set up redistribution mechanisms for the victims of the high price of gas? When will they take action?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has already indicated and I have already indicated that we are tracking very carefully any increase in tax revenue flowing to the Government of Canada from the spike of energy prices around the world. We intend to ensure that indeed the full benefit of any gain of that sort flows to low income families in this country.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a country needs two kinds of leadership. One is ceremonial, it is important, and we celebrated it this morning, but the other requires action, and the Prime Minister has been missing in action when it comes to standing up for this country.

The NAFTA decision has been available for four months and the only response thus far has been talk. What we need is action. When is the Prime Minister going to take action to protect Canadian individuals, communities and jobs on the softwood lumber issue?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the parties are not at the table at the present time precisely because Canada decided that if the Americans were not going to accept the findings of these panel discussions and live up to the letter and the spirit, then we were not going to sit down at the table unless we were given an indication of good faith by the other side that in fact the negotiations and the discussions would lead to something.

The fact is that we are standing up for Canada and standing up for NAFTA and we will continue to do so. It would be very helpful if all of the members on this side of the House and on that side of the

House would join with the Government of Canada to say that the terms and the spirit of NAFTA must be lived up to.

* * *

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Let me get this straight, Mr. Speaker. While originally we had talk as a response to George Bush, now the Prime Minister is offering silence. If that is the definition of leadership, I do not think it is one that Canadians appreciate.

In fact, we can see the same phenomenon with the CBC. The CBC has been silenced for seven weeks and for seven weeks the Prime Minister has been silent about whether or not he supports CBC management's attempt to take apart our public broadcaster. Does he support CBC management's undermining of our public broadcasting, yes or no? Will he tell us?

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of action, some of us in fact do a heck of a lot more than just walk in parades. We work each and every day and that is exactly what we have done with regard to the CBC. We have brought people to the table. They are there right now trying to negotiate through this so that in fact Canadians get the services they want and especially so our northern and remote communities get the CBC. It is a public institution and we in fact are protecting it.

* * *

● (1435)

JUSTICE

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fallen RCMP officers were killed in my riding, where drugs like marijuana and methamphetamine continue to ruin young lives and destroy communities, yet the government appears cold to helping. We need truth and answers in this House and we need truth in sentencing for criminals.

Will this government commit to mandatory prison sentences for serious drug and violent crimes?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are serious sentences with respect to the amphetamine regulatory changes we initiated this summer.

With regard to matters now before the House, they are before the parliamentary committee. If the committee wants to move any amendments to the legislation, it can do so.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what happened this summer is no answer.

Yesterday the families warned that there are thousands of other James Roszkos all across this country, in every police division, putting police and ordinary Canadian citizens at risk.

The families have sound ideas on how to fix the system. One of the things they would like to see is a scrapping of Bill C-17, this government's soft approach to marijuana. We need some straight and honest answers in the House. Will the government scrap the bill?

Oral Question Period

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on mandatory minimums and gun related crimes, I want to state that there are more mandatory minimums for gun related crimes than any other crime in the Criminal Code with the exception of murder.

With regard to the question of marijuana, we are not going to scrap a bill that was unanimously recommended by a previous parliamentary committee.

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Justice to support mandatory prison sentences for drug dealers, gunmen and other repeat violent offenders. The minister avoided the question and suggested he was looking at tinkering with the provisions governing house arrest.

This minister is providing no direction. Why will the minister not commit to bringing forward mandatory prison sentences for drug dealers, gunmen and other repeat offenders, violent offenders, so that Canadians can live in safe communities?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do not need to be lectured by the opposition on safe communities. If the member opposite would just open the Criminal Code and read it for a change, he would find that there are mandatory minimums with respect to the offences of which he is speaking. And if he would look to the south to which he is always referring, he would see that the American Bar Association last year recommended to do away with mandatory minimums because they have no effect, they do not deter and they result in unnecessary incapacitation and unnecessary costs to the system without protecting security.

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the judges tell us every day in their sentences that it is the direction from the minister and his government that requires them to give house arrest. That is the minister's direction. Other overwhelming evidence from jurisdictions has demonstrated that mandatory sentences for violent offenders have substantially reduced crimes in large cities, yet despite the evidence, the minister stated that mandatory prison sentences do not work.

Given the absolute failure of the minister's strategy, why does he not adopt a new one?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one difference between me and the hon. member opposite is that I have read the evidence and he is making up the evidence.

* * *

[Translation]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Industry indicated that he was finally looking at giving some teeth to the Competition Act, as we have been asking for nearly five years.

Will the minister tell us what his intentions are exactly and confirm that he does plan to augment significantly the powers of the Competition Bureau, so that it can efficiently investigate the conduct of the oil industry?

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-19 is in the House. It does strengthen the Competition Act. I am prepared to look at further amendments. We are prepared to look at giving the Competition Bureau the power to undertake investigations of industries and take action as needed. We are prepared to listen if the hon. member has some suggestions for further improvements to the act. We will have further suggestions of our own.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if he is serious about wanting to better protect consumers against the oil companies, should the minister not act on another recommendation of ours and set up the petroleum monitoring agency, so that fluctuations in petroleum product prices can be examined and explained to consumers on a regular basis?

[English]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is indeed one of the issues we are looking at very closely.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec minister of the environment said this about Kyoto: We will not allow ourselves to be punished. Now the feds are telling us "That is all very fine, and yes, you do have only half the greenhouse gas emissions that other Canadians do, but we are not going to take into account the efforts you have already financed".

Why is the Minister of the Environment refusing to have territorial agreements, when this approach would restore justice to Quebec, once and for all?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, negotiations with the Government of Quebec in connection with the partnership for climate change are proceeding very well.

Moreover, because of the way targets have been assigned to industry, those with low emissions will have fewer reductions to make. Thus, of the 45 megatonnes Canada has to reduce, only 3 will come from Quebec.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yet minister Mulcair has also been quoted as saying: The federal minister is putting \$10 billion of Canadian taxpayers' money on the table, which includes Quebecers' money of course, and here he is telling me "Not only will I not recognize past efforts, but on top of that, I will take money from your taxpayers and ship it off to Alberta, which has a \$10 billion surplus". That strikes us as totally wrong, and we will never go along with it.

Why is the Minister of the Environment doggedly sticking to this approach, which has no justification, and which rubs even the most federalist of Quebec politicians the wrong way?

Oral Question Period

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member was too busy reading his questions to listen to what I just answered. The very fact that a given province has lower greenhouse gas emissions will mean that province will not be required to cut as many tonnes. This is absolute logic, which undoubtedly escapes the hon. member, who cannot see beyond his separatist questions.

* * *

[English]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government rakes in about \$40 million every time the price of gasoline goes up a single cent. In Nova Scotia over the past month the gas prices have fluctuated between \$1.12 and \$1.49. The finance minister told us yesterday that any increase in gas tax revenue will be redirected to the benefit of all Canadians. Of course, we know what this means, it is the usual pre-election vote buying spree we often see.

Here is an idea. Why not just let Canadians keep more of their hard-earned tax dollars? The Prime Minister does not like paying taxes. Why does he think Canadians do?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in an industry in which retail prices can bounce around by 10¢ or 20¢ or even more per litre within just a few hours, it is difficult to demonstrate a consumer benefit from a simple tax cut, as appealing as that might sound. The industry itself has indicated that one might need a forensic auditor to find the benefit. Even the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla, when he was the distinguished treasurer of the province of Alberta, expressed the opinion that a consumer benefit could not be guaranteed.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister knows an awful lot about bouncing around when it comes to his facts. Yesterday the Prime Minister said that Canadians will not get a tax break at the pumps because according to him, gas tax money is going to be sent to cities to pay for good roads.

Well, again the Prime Minister has been caught out being liberal with the truth. The mayor of Winnipeg, Sam Katz, said he cannot use these funds to fix potholes in the roads in his city because the Prime Minister has put stringent conditions on this tax.

Why did the Prime Minister again mislead municipalities and all Canadians by saying he would use the gas tax in the provinces?

• (1445)

Hon. John Godfrey (Minister of State (Infrastructure and Communities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are having excellent conversations with the mayor of Winnipeg, with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, with the Manitoba government. We will find a solution which works for both of us very soon.

* * *

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have reached a new low in ethics today. Convicted Liberal fraudster, Paul Coffin, is set to give his first lecture on ethics to

university students. I wonder how many cabinet ministers are planning on attending.

Canadian taxpayers have been robbed of over \$1 million and robbed of the justice they deserve due to Coffin's unethical actions solely because of the unethical actions of the government.

Is it not time to start seeing Liberals go to jail for the worst scandal in Canadian political history?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands asked a question and I know he is waiting to hear the answer from the Minister of Justice. We cannot hear a thing. The Minister of Justice now has the floor. I know the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands will encourage his colleagues to pipe down so we can hear the answer.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two responses. One, ministers of justice do not comment on specific sentences in specific cases. I would appreciate it if the member opposite would understand that. Two, with regard to the matter of sentences in any particular case, it is the provincial Crowns that prosecute and make submissions before the court.

[Translation]

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today Paul Coffin, the only person to have been sanctioned for that fraud, is giving his first lecture on ethics at McGill University.

How can the public continue to have confidence in Canadian justice, when the only person punished for this fraud is called upon to give lectures on ethics?

When, then, will a Liberal be really punished and put in jail?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is the same question, only in French. So the answer is also the same in French.

* * *

[English]

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more and more Canadian seniors and people with disabilities are receiving unpaid care in their own home, care that is provided by friends, neighbours or family members. This trend is expected to grow over the next decade with Canada's aging and diversifying population.

Could the Minister of State for Families and Caregivers tell the House what the government has done in order to ensure the well-being of families, seniors and caregivers?

Hon. Tony Ianno (Minister of State (Families and Caregivers), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member on her efforts with regard to seniors and caregivers.

Oral Question Period

As the hon. member knows, this government has been working ferociously to ensure that our seniors have the dignity that they deserve in our society. We have doubled the medical expense tax credit for those disabilities and the families and caregivers. We have made the largest GIS increase in the history of this country. We will continue working with the seniors secretariat to ensure that we are ahead of the curve on the demographics so that our seniors are taken care of. We are working with the caregiver stakeholders across the country to ensure that we are sensitive—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor West.

* * *

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people are burning more oil because the government has done nothing whatsoever to introduce regulations to increase efficiency. Ten U.S. states actually have better laws and regulations than this government.

Because people are burning more, they are paying more, getting fleeced by oil companies which have no requirements to explain their pricing. The mandatory measures have not come in by the Minister of Industry. What is he going to do specifically to ensure that Canadians are protected and big oil is not rewarded?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that we have entered into an agreement with the automotive sector to reduce emissions in automobiles and that we are supporting an enormous amount of environmental technology. In the \$4.5-plus billion increases in investment that are going into Canada and Ontario, there is an awful lot of environmental improvement there.

• (1450)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has helped the oil and gas industry by providing in 2002 \$1.4 billion in subsidies and additional corporate taxes that are reduced, all while the industry reaps in record profits. The government backed off mandatory fuel efficiency standards to help people burn less and it refuses to explain how it will protect people from predatory prices.

Will the government admit that voluntary regulations do not work on efficiency and will not work on pricing? Does the government have the courage to get tough with big oil and put Canadians first?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a bit pathetic when I hear a member of the NDP calling for a tax on a sector, given that the member and his community are so dependent on the automotive sector. To hear him talking like that, calling for mandatory regulations that would hurt the industry and that would drive investments south of the border, I think is pathetic.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the U.S. border was closed to Canadian beef, this government dithered about before appealing the U.S. government's decision. Now no less than six states are trying to reverse the decision and close their borders again.

As usual, this government is saying nothing and doing nothing. Why is the Prime Minister refusing to support our farmers and other workers in the natural resources sector?

[English]

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is simply wrong in her facts. The issue was resolved in the appeals court. The Government of Canada had its amicus brief in the appeals court. The Conservative Party did not.

The Government of Canada, this party, was there defending Canadian producers; that party was not.

Ms. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three months ago the Liberal government rolled the dice in a crap shoot. It gambled the future of Canada's livestock producers on one appeal court in Seattle, with no plan B if things went wrong. Now forces are trying to make things go very wrong.

If that happens, thankfully, Conservative parliamentarians will be in Montana to stand up for Canadian producers, and shamefully, the Liberal government will not. Is that because the government is indifferent to agriculture, or incompetent, or both?

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. member pointed out that under the leadership of this government, of this party, of this Prime Minister, the border was reopened.

Also, as they were trying to rebook their flights to Montana, the federal minister along with the 10 provincial ministers were meeting in Alberta and did in fact develop a contingency plan, which we hope will not be necessary.

* * *

INCOME TRUSTS

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the finance minister cancelled advance tax rulings on income trusts last week, he devastated the retirement nest eggs of millions of Canadians. Here is what one of them wrote me and said, "I'm near retirement and thanks to Income Trusts I can finally see that I'll be able to retire in dignity. I do not want to be a Wal-Mart greeter. Now the Finance Minister wants to take that away from us working class retirees by screwing up Income Trusts".

Why is the minister bullying investors and seniors who, in their own words, just want to retire in dignity?

Oral Question Period

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can all review our correspondence and see views on different sides of different issues. I can assure the hon. gentleman that the representations currently being made to the Department of Finance are running about 75% in favour of the position that the government has taken.

The fact of the matter is this is an important public policy question. It has to do with revenue to all governments, including the provinces. It has to do with fairness in the business system of this country, and it has to do with productivity and growth for the future. We would like to get the policy right for the long term and we think it is important to consult with Canadians to ensure that happens.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the difference between us and them. The Liberals care about revenue for government when they are running multi-billion dollar surpluses. We care about the dignity of seniors and investors.

Another investor wrote me to point out that the minister destroyed 15% of the value of his investment portfolio with his thumb-sucking musings about income trusts the other week. How will the minister make that up to that person and the millions of others he devastated with his remarks last week?

• (1455)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps, like some of the folks that the hon. gentleman is referring to, his own hysteria and hyperbole are contributing to the problem.

It is important to have a rational discussion about the future of business organization in this country, including fairness among all the ways in which businesses can be organized, and to ensure that we are contributing to growth and productivity in the future and not locked into the past. We want to have that dialogue. We want to have a policy that builds for the future of all Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber dispute is nowhere near resolution, judging by the attitude of the U.S. industry, which, unhappy with the decisions, is disputing the very legitimacy of NAFTA.

Day after day for three years, the Bloc Québécois has been asking the government to provide concrete help to the softwood lumber industry, namely by providing loan guarantees.

Does the Minister of International Trade not feel the time has come to give the softwood lumber industry some concrete help? Does he intend to provide the loan guarantees the industry is looking for?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for this very important question. Softwood lumber and the softwood lumber industry are very important to our country. Furthermore, the Americans absolutely must respect NAFTA conditions.

That being said, our attitude in the past has illustrated our willingness to work with and support the communities, the workers

and the industry. We have already given them over \$300,000. We have supported the industries with a \$20 million subsidy. We are continuing to help them.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the figure the hon. member is referring to dates back to 2003. That \$20 million is a drop in the bucket compared to the expenses the industry has incurred and will continue to incur to defend itself in the American courts. This is no laughing matter. It is very clear that the American strategy is to buy time in order to kill the industry so that when the issue is resolved there will be no players left.

Does the minister realize that one way to help the softwood lumber industry get through this crisis and recover the tariffs the U.S. authorities illegally imposed is to give the industry loan guarantees, period?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the best way to help the softwood lumber industry is to end this dispute. We are taking every possible step at this time, including litigation in the U.S. courts and at the WTO. We will continue our efforts in Washington to promote the interests of this industry. The Americans must respect NAFTA.

* * *

[English]

TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIPS CANADA

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under section 6.5 of all Technology Partnerships Canada agreements, it is expressly forbidden to pay lobbyists contingency fees for successfully securing a TPC grant. Despite this, former Liberal cabinet minister David Dingwall was reported to have received \$350,000 from a company in exchange for securing a technology partnerships grant.

Will the Minister of Industry simply confirm that David Dingwall did in fact receive the bonus for securing a TPC grant for his client and if so, exactly how much was he paid?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt about it that under the technology partnerships program the government has contractual relationships with companies and those companies have an obligation to abide by the terms and conditions.

One of the terms and conditions, as the hon. member said, is that individuals cannot have an unregistered lobbyist and if they have a lobbyist, they cannot be paid a success fee or a contingency fee.

We have found examples of that and we are moving to correct them with zero tolerance. The relationship between the companies and their lobbyists is one that they are working on and until we have very specific information that we should act on, we will just continue to deal with—

• (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is taxpayer money that is being squandered. Canadians have a right to know why a former Liberal cabinet minister received a kickback against his government's own rules.

Oral Question Period

I have two direct questions for the Minister of Industry. How much money has been received that he knows of, in total, for lobbyists securing these TPC grants and why is the government itself not pursuing the kickbacks paid to these lobbyists instead of leaving it up to the companies?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw attention of the House to the premise here. Canada has a competitiveness challenge going forward. Manufacturing industries have been shedding jobs, over 100,000 over the last year.

It is very important that we encourage innovation, technology use and improve the competitiveness of the Canadian economy. We are reviewing technology partnerships. We have replaced the program. We have a new program with a broader, more effective orientation, stronger administration, and that is what we are going to continue to do because it is good for the Canadian economy.

* * *

TELUS COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, TELUS Communications and the Telecommunications Workers Union have now been without a collective agreement since December 31, 2000. The ongoing inability of these parties to reach an agreement has caused great uncertainty for the workers and disruption of service to many of my constituents. This is a matter that needs to be resolved now for the benefit of all concerned, the community, the workers and the company.

Can the Minister of Labour and Housing give us an update on the status of this dispute?

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for North Vancouver for his question and to indicate to him that yes, it has been four and a half years. Over 13,000 workers at TELUS have been without an agreement and thousands and thousands of communities are affected. That is why my negotiators have been trying to get both parties to the table.

I want to confirm that yesterday in fact both TELUS and its telecommunication workers agreed to get back to the table. I would encourage all members who believe that this is an important issue to encourage them to come to an agreement and to get on with good bargaining, and to put in place an agreement that will satisfy both parties.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is up to his old tricks again. This time he stuck the taxpayers with a bill of \$6,800 for meals he had in a two month period earlier this year. His staff stuck the taxpayers with another \$6,000 in restaurant costs. This averages \$285 per meal.

Most Canadian families spend less on groceries in a week than the minister does on lunch. How can he justify this?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the House well knows of course, with my additional responsibilities as regional minister, I have occasion to

speak with many stakeholders. I have had a lot of meetings. I welcome the fact that I have this kind of a responsibility. All I can tell the member, and everyone in the House, that everything met Treasury Board guidelines.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, his expenses are almost four times the average of his fellow political ministers in cabinet. According to official government disclosure statements, the minister had two breakfasts on March 22, two lunches on March 3, and two dinners on March 21. Either the minister was really hungry or his staff had made fraudulent meal claims on behalf of the minister.

Why did the minister give his staff approval to file these overstuffed expense claims?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my responsibilities I do have opportunity to meet with stakeholders and interested parties. As the member will know, in the course of this next month I will present to Parliament a yearly immigration plan. This has given me an opportunity to meet with many people.

Yes, I do go to various places during the course of the day. As I said, one of the functions of the transparency provisions is so that people can see what ministers do. We have done that and we have done it within the Treasury Board guidelines.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. It is very difficult to hear the answers with all the argy-bargy we have in the House today. Perhaps hon. members could control themselves.

An hon. member: What's an argy-bargy?

The Speaker: Members can speak to their House leader and learn about that term.

* * *

● (1505)

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works can repeat ad nauseam that his department is reviewing the invitation to tender process that was in place for the EnerGuide program, but the fact remains that francophone bidders were disadvantaged due to significant gaps between the French and English versions of the specifications.

If the Minister of Public Works is truly concerned about being fair to francophone bidders, he should cancel the contracts and start the tender process all over again.

Does he intend to adopt this solution?

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are reviewing this procurement process. If it is determined that bidders were disqualified due solely to the discrepancy between French and English versions of the RFP, then we will move swiftly to add all those bidders to the supplier list.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

We intend to take care of this problem immediately, and we fully support the Official Languages Act.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

The Prime Minister and the premiers signed the \$41 billion 10 year agreement on health care one year ago this month. Reducing wait times was a centrepiece of that agreement and very important to the many Canadians and their families on those waiting lists.

Can the minister tell the House whether all parties will meet the December 31, 2005 wait times deadline?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this was an extraordinary contract that the first ministers entered into to reduce wait times and establish benchmarks by December 31, 2005. The provinces and the federal government are working together. We appointed Brian Postl as federal wait times advisor on this issue.

I want to say that no government has an option to not honour that contract and to not establish benchmarks by December 31, 2005 and we will do that.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

The committee has studied Bill C-11, an act to establish a procedure for the disclosure of wrongdoing in the public sector, including the protection of persons who disclose the wrongdoings, and has agreed to report it with amendment.

FINANCE

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Finance on Bill C-273, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, deduction for volunteer emergency services.

The committee is requesting an extension of 30 sitting days to consider Bill C-273, an act to amend the Income Tax Act.

● (1510)

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97(1)(3)(a), a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, September 28, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

PETITIONS

HOLIDAYS ACT

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise today to present a number of petitions for the good people of Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette.

The first petition contains thousands of names and it calls upon Parliament to enact Bill C-295, an act to amend the Holidays Act, to recognize Remembrance Day as a legal holiday that honours the men and women who died serving this country in wars and in peacekeeping efforts.

WEATHER OFFICES

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the next petition, the petitioners request that Parliament, in the interest of the safety of all Canadians using airports, keep the 16 weather offices open and employed with certified weather observers. It may be such that some of the weather offices are closed, and upon the review of this petition, the petitioners request that Parliament reopen the above stated weather offices.

CANADA POST

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my next petition calls upon Parliament to keep the post offices open at the communities of Isabella, Miniota, Makinak and Inglis in my riding of Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last petition calls upon Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being a union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

CANADA POST

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of the people of Lenore, Manitoba, dealing with the closure of rural post offices. The petitioners state that the government has put a moratorium on post office closures since 1994. They know that Canada Post has closed a significant number of rural post offices already.

Therefore, the petitioners of Lenore ask that the government keep the Lenore post office open and retain the moratorium on rural post office closures.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I promised yesterday, for the days and weeks ahead, at every opportunity I will be rising to present a petition on the following subject.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to immediately enact legislation to grant automatic citizenship to those minors adopted from other countries by Canadian citizens, with the citizenship being immediately granted upon the finalization of the adoption. They note that it is illogical and an inefficient use of federal resources to add these adopted infants and children to the tremendous backlog of citizenship applications that already exist.

This summer the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration promised to introduce legislation to grant automatic citizenship to children adopted from other countries. Therefore, they call upon him to do so as soon as possible and remove this undue burden from adoptive parents.

On behalf of these petitioners from St. Catharines, Orillia and Niagara Falls in Ontario, I hope that he would act expeditiously.

• (1515)

MARRIAGE

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by a number of Canadians, including from my own riding of Mississauga South, pursuant to Standing Order 36 and certified to be in the correct form and content. The subject matter is marriage.

As we heard prior to our break for some time, even notwithstanding Bill C-38, Canadians continue to believe that marriage is the best foundation for families and the raising of children and that the definition of marriage as between a man and a woman continues to be challenged.

The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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[*Translation*]

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask you to call Motions Nos. P-9 and P-14.

Motion No. P-9

That an Order of this House do issue for: (a) the 2002 report concerning the administration of the Canadian Grain Commission authored by Doug Livingstone, Germaine Douk and Owen MacAuley; and (b) any and all reports and studies concerning the administration, organization and operation of the Canadian Grain Commission prepared for and delivered to the office of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food during the period from January 2000 to January 2005.

Motion No. P-14

Government Orders

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all studies performed by the government on the effect of changes in work/rest hours for railway workers on rail safety.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-9, in the name of the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster, and No. P-14, in the name of the hon. member for Churchill, is acceptable to the government and the documents are tabled immediately.

(Motions agreed to)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I would ask that other notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from September 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (trafficking in persons), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-49, an act to amend the Criminal Code, trafficking in persons. The bill is unquestionably an important step toward protecting the vulnerable and is also a reflection of the government's commitment to ensuring Canadians clearly recognize and strongly denounce the practice of human trafficking.

Bill C-49 demonstrates the government's commitment to these priorities as it introduces indictable offences to address the horrible human rights violation that is human trafficking.

The main offence related to the trafficking in persons would essentially prohibit anyone from engaging in specified acts such as recruiting, transporting, harbouring or controlling the movements of another person for the purpose of exploiting or facilitating the exploitation of that person. Under Bill C-49, this offence becomes punishable up to life imprisonment depending on the severity and the harmfulness the trafficking caused the victims and Canadian society.

Bill C-49 would not only protect the vulnerable but it would also serve to deter those who seek to profit from the exploitation of others by making it an offence to receive a financial or material benefit knowing that it results from the trafficking of persons. An individual found guilty of this offence could face up to 10 years imprisonment for their involvement in trafficking.

Bill C-49 proposes to forbid the withholding or destroying of travel or identity documents in order to commit or facilitate the trafficking of persons. Involvement in this type of conduct would be punishable by a maximum of five years imprisonment.

Government Orders

Recently in a report released on May 11 by the international labour organization, it was estimated that 2.45 million people around the world are forced into labour conditions as a result of human trafficking. Who are the primary victims? They are women and children. UNICEF has estimated that 1.2 million children are being trafficked around the world each year.

Numbers like these demonstrate the magnitude as well as the urgency of strengthening both domestic and international measures to combat human trafficking. It is our duty to ensure that we have the best response possible to this horrible crime that violates the most basic human rights.

Bill C-49 would strengthen Canada's legal framework by building upon existing local and global responses to human trafficking. Currently, there are many international mechanisms that respond to human trafficking, including the most recent one which is the United Nations Conventions Against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplemental protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children. These offer a widely accepted international framework for addressing this issue. Bill C-49 more clearly reflects this framework.

Canada's approach, as it is stated in Bill C-49, focuses on the prevention of trafficking, the protection of its victims and the prosecution of the offenders. The reforms proposed by Bill C-49 send a direct message to those who seek to exploit the most vulnerable members of our society through this intolerable form of conduct.

Bill C-49 would strengthen Canada's current responses to trafficking by building upon existing provisions in the Criminal Code and would also complement the provisions of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act that look to prevent Canada's border from being breached by human trafficking smugglers.

The government is also working to address human trafficking in a non-legislative manner as well. In April 2004 the Department of Justice launched a website on trafficking persons. This website provides important information for the public describing the problems and providing related links.

Education and awareness are moving forward through the development within Canada and to Canadian embassies in the form of posters and information pamphlets which are both available in 14 different languages.

Training and education about human trafficking began with a training seminar in March 2004. This program was co-hosted by the Department of Justice Canada and the International Organization for Migration. A similar seminar was also hosted by the RCMP in May in Vancouver.

I support Bill C-49 because it demonstrates our commitment to bringing human trafficking to an end. The bill serves to protect millions of women and children and would hold traffickers accountable. I hope all members recognize the importance of the bill and vote in favour of this important legislation.

• (1520)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I noted from the comments of my colleague from Davenport that Bill C-49

proposes stiff penalties for those who would exploit women and children and in the trafficking of women and children.

What would be the application of Bill C-49 in a situation where the Government of Canada put immigration workers over in Romania and Budapest to seduce young women to come to Canada under the exotic dancer's visa and then to have these women imported by immigration lawyers in Toronto who own the strip clubs and have these women by the hundreds fall into what can only be categorized as sex slavery and human bondage?

Could the hon. member, as a representative of the government side, tell me how Bill C-49 would apply to this wholesale human trafficking that was the exotic dancers program with his government pimping for the underworld to import strippers who then get lost into pornography and prostitution by the hundreds? How would it deal with the mess that his government has created with its own trafficking of sex trade workers?

• (1525)

Mr. Mario Silva: Mr. Speaker, I must say that I do have great respect for the member and his question but I fail to see the link. Maybe he could explain in a supplementary question if he wants to ask one.

I and I think most Canadians do not believe that the government is in any way, shape or form engaging in human trafficking. The facts suggest that it is a little absurd.

We have been working very strongly with international organizations with the UN Convention on Human Trafficking. Canada is a signatory to that protocol. We also work very strongly with our municipal officials and our provincial governments to ensure that does not happen in Canada. Canada is a great model for the rest of the world. We should be proud of this country and what it does to protect children and women.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the question the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre asked was absolutely relevant. I think that the member for Davenport misunderstood it. Let me ask it again.

Much to our amazement, we learned yesterday, as we began debating this bill, that human trafficking is currently not subject to any legislation in this country. Consequently, we are wondering if there could actually be policies unwittingly promoting human trafficking.

I think this was the gist of what the member for Winnipeg Centre said. His point was that, when offshore labour is imported in response to a shortage—that is what this is about—like in the case of bars looking for exotic dancers and importing them from Rumania or elsewhere, these individuals often get mixed up with organized crime. That is the risk.

In trying to strike a balance with our own Canadian policies, has this ramification not been considered? In fact, are we not fostering this to some extent through our policies? I am talking about the Canadian government, of course. Is it not contributing to getting individuals, in this case exotic dancers, mixed up with organized crime?

Government Orders

I think that is what my colleague asked, and I am asking the same question.

Mr. Mario Silva: Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the opposition member who asked this question.

I have already pointed out how important this legislation is to Canadians and to the future of our country. I fully support this bill, as does everyone I hope.

In a sense, this bill is a step toward respect for the rights of the men and women of this country, that is every citizen of this country.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I have a brief follow up. The member for Davenport specifically cited aspects of Bill C-49 that had strict penalties for things like seizing the travel documents of foreign workers so that they cannot leave and forcing them into labour conditions that more resemble slavery.

I ask my colleague to reconsider his remarks. Surely he followed the *Toronto Star* and the widespread journalism coverage of specific bars in Toronto that had visitor work visas for exotic dancers but the women were in fact treated like sex slaves. These women had their travel documents taken away from them and they were forced into activities that they did not wish to go into, pornography and prostitution, and their wages were withheld. It was human bondage.

Will my colleague at least concede that this has been an extended problem within his own jurisdiction in Toronto stemming from Canada immigration policies that have been at least enabling and facilitating the trafficking of human beings with the government's exotic dancer visa program?

• (1530)

Mr. Mario Silva: Mr. Speaker, I believe I already answered that question, although I am a little confused as to where the hon. member is going with that question.

I assume that he is in support of the bill that is before the House, as all members should be. It is an important bill that moves forward on certain United Nations conventions to which we have been a signator.

I do not see the relevance in the member's question. I hope the member is not suggesting in any way, shape or form that Canada is engaged in human trafficking in the sex trade. I would be quite appalled if the member were in fact suggesting that is the direction this country is moving toward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Speaker, we are the ones who are surprised that the member for Davenport does not truly understand the scope of this bill. Sometimes, although its purpose may be different, a federal policy results in the admission of individuals to Canada who are victims of human trafficking, as defined in the bill. There is a good and fairly recent example of this; I am talking about the issue of strippers. I think that his government was forced to deal with this issue often enough in recent months.

Without meaning to or having that as our goal, we may encourage strippers to come from abroad, for example, and they are then

subjected to the market demand facing this “workforce”—if one can call it that—in an industry where organized crime is very present.

Everyone knows that organized crime is heavily involved in the bar scene, particularly bars that have women dancers and I am not talking about artistic dancing. I am talking about strippers.

Organized crime goes hand in hand with human trafficking, as defined in this bill. That is what we are talking about here.

If the member is not able to answer the question, he should say so. That is okay. However, we will put it again to his government colleagues, who will have to answer it.

Mr. Mario Silva: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for having repeated his question. I already explained the situation, and the great importance of this bill. I hope that everyone will vote in favour of it.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to speak to Bill C-49 to perhaps develop the concerns that I raised.

Let me preface this by saying that I am proud that Canada is taking on the global issue of trafficking in human beings. I had some experience with this as the immigration critic for my party when not too long ago boatloads of Chinese immigrants were washing up on the shores of British Columbia. To some consternation, there seemed to be waves of humans being smuggled, some 600 in total.

As we investigated this rash of illegal migrants, it became clear that they were being smuggled in a very organized and structured way by groups of Asian organized crime known as snakeheads. This is a reprehensible practice. People's hopes and ambitions were being exploited by these snakeheads who I suppose offered opportunities or hopes of a better life.

However that is only one example and that perhaps is a more benign example of the type of human trafficking that is a growing problem around the world.

In that case, those people were cheated and undertook a very dangerous practice of being smuggled across the seas, often in shipping containers, or through other methods where they could risk their lives. That was bad enough but the type of human trafficking, the type of modern day slave trade trafficking that is being contemplated by Bill C-49, is of another scale and dimension altogether. It is almost too horrible to imagine.

We recently saw a documentary on one of the news magazine programs in Canada. Some very good investigative journalism has been done showing how vulnerable young people are being seduced off the streets in places such as eastern Europe and some of the Asian countries with offers of opportunities, sometimes being misled and offered legitimate jobs in their destination country, and sometimes being overtly kidnapped and forced into this.

Government Orders

This used to be the stuff of dime store novels where we would hear this kind of thing happening. It is to our shock, horror and dismay to have to admit that in the year 2005 it is commonplace and in fact it is growing in practice. In developed nations, modern, contemporary countries such as Canada, it is incumbent upon us to lead the way by passing legislation that condemns this practice universally.

However the contradiction that I was trying to raise with my colleague from Davenport is that Canada has been enabling this very practice for years. Through three successive ministers of immigration, all very strong women, this practice was allowed to continue. I know for a fact that some of them tried to intervene and put a stop to the exotic dancer visa program.

One of the owners of the hotels, a famous immigration lawyer in Toronto who owns one of the strip joints, one of the biggest beneficiaries of this program, was actually interviewed by Immigration Canada. When asked about the condition of the employment of these women who were being called in to dance, he said, "Don't worry about it. Tell the minister that they are treated like fine race horses". That was the Toronto immigration lawyer's attitude when asked to explain the terms and conditions of employment. In other words, he is keeping a stable of exotic dancers, of strippers.

• (1535)

We know that as many 500 of these women have been lost. They have literally slipped through the cracks at Immigration Canada. They were corralled in Romania and Hungary, where Canadian immigration officers, to enable the demand for these exotic dancers by Toronto immigration lawyers, were sent to actually recruit dancers. Taxpayers' money was spent for immigration officers to actually station themselves in Romania and sign up as many as 200 of these exotic dancer visa applicants at a time.

Then, when the women do in fact come to Canada, they find that over time their papers are taken away from them. This is the accusation made. We heard testimony to this effect on that news show which was recently broadcast. This would be a violation of and a crime under Bill C-49. As for their working conditions, they are told that their travel is restricted and they have to stay in a certain hotel. Often they are locked in certain hotel rooms, and exotic dancing leads to lap dancing, which leads to pornography and has led to prostitution, and then the women disappear.

This is horrific, whole scale, widespread exploitation of women that not only involves human trafficking but is modern day slavery. As for the fact that my own government, the Government of Canada, was facilitating this, I find it hard to get my mind around that. The fact that it was allowed to continue by otherwise progressive and feminist ministers of immigration is mind-boggling to me.

I have to rise and ask my colleague from Davenport how he squares that in his own mind. The Liberals have a Minister of Justice doing and saying all the right things internationally about trying to be at the leading edge in putting a stop to the international trafficking of human beings, whereas our own recent experience right up until a few months ago was that we were actually engaged in what I call the human trafficking and exploitation and sex slavery of women from East European countries.

God knows what happened to the 500 women who have disappeared. Maybe they have been smuggled out of the country again. That is most serious form of trafficking. Even if it was not illegal trafficking to get the women here, it certainly became illegal trafficking when they were moved across another border into the United States or God knows where.

There is an underworld that exists for this international trafficking of human beings and clearly that underworld exists in this country. I accuse that Toronto immigration lawyer of being part of that underworld. These people know who they are. They are very well known. They are in the Yellow Pages. I could tell this House their names, but I will not bother in this place because it is not worth the hassle of agitating lawyers.

In actual fact, Canada has been complicit in this international trafficking of human beings in recent years. I do not know if we have the right to be pious about our introduction of Bill C-49. When I raise this issue, it is not to be critical of the intentions and the goals of Bill C-49. These are laudable concepts. I would expect nothing else from a country such as Canada but to put in place perhaps the toughest human trafficking legislation in the world. I would be very proud.

There is one thing about Canada and our adherence to and ratification of international conventions and treaties. I have always been very proud that we do not ratify international conventions and treaties unless we actually intend to comply with and abide by them.

It has actually held us back in some respects. I have always been a little bit embarrassed that Canada has never ratified the international convention against child labour. Canada has not done that for specific reasons. In some of our prairie provinces it is not unusual for kids to be taken out of school at harvest time and seeding time to help their families around the farm. Even though we do not consider that child labour, that would be in slight violation of the literal interpretation of ILO convention 183 against child labour. We have not ratified that convention.

I raise that only as an example. I have found it a source of pride that when Canada participates in an international convention or agreement we do it with our eyes open and with every intention of complying to the letter of the law.

• (1540)

How, then, do we work with our partners and colleagues internationally to stem this rising tide of the trafficking of human beings when we knowingly and willingly allow this horror to take place with our eyes open?

I say "allow it to take place" because it has been at least five years since I have been aware of this stripper program, this exotic dancer visa immigration special deal to supply the pornography and sex trade with fresh, young, vulnerable women from desperate circumstances. That has been Canadian policy. It has been a big chunk of the immigration department that has been allocated to this one program. I am not trying to say that it is a third of the department's budget or anything, but it is to the point where full time officers were sent to Romania and Hungary to meet with and interview women specifically for that program.

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I would argue that more care and attention have been put into the stripper program, the exotic dancer visa program, than the live-in caregiver program that provides domestic help from places like the Philippines. These programs are on a comparable scale. The difference is that on the one side we are condemning someone to sexual slavery and exploitation and on the other side we are providing a legitimate, hourly paid job at above minimum wage with Saturdays and Sundays off. This is a glaring contrast.

How could anybody in all good conscience allow this number of years to go by and be complicit with and in direction and control of a program that is tantamount to modern day sexual slavery? It absolutely boggles my mind.

As we dwell today on Bill C-49, we are talking about introducing stiff penalties for things like seizing workers' travel documents and passports. Under Bill C-49, that would be a crime punishable by up to five years in prison. That is a heavy penalty. That is far more than one would get for stealing money in the sponsorship program, so obviously the Government of Canada frowns on the idea of seizing someone's personal passport and not allowing him or her to travel.

Yet it has overlooked this in the stripper programs for years, forcing these women into labour conditions that may resemble slavery more than anything. That would be a penalty punishable by Bill C-49. What I mean by this is modern day bondage, where persons have to pay back their bond before they are allowed to begin earning a normal income.

This is exactly the structure of the exotic dancer program, which was allowed to proliferate for so many years. The women are brought over here and are told they have to pay off their travel costs first. It is a classic organized crime structure. That travel costs figure seems to be never ending. It seems to compound. They have an impossible task. They can never seem to pay it off. Therefore, their servitude and their bondage extend and extend. It is in fact modern day slavery.

On exploitation in terms of pornography and the smuggling of children, I have a researcher in Ireland who follows the human sex trade trafficking issue. It is his full time occupation. He phoned our office saying that some of the women who were imported into the exotic dancer visa program and who came to Canada were in fact under age and using false documents. In fact, this Irish non-profit organization is accusing Canada not just of trafficking and smuggling human beings in order to pimp for the underworld, but of trafficking in children, in underage, young, vulnerable women. This is information we will have to collaborate on, but it is not beyond the realm of possibility that a young woman desperate enough to come to Canada to change her circumstances may in fact have been casual about the age she put on the application.

I condemn in the strongest possible terms the Toronto immigration lawyers who own the strip clubs and who convinced the Liberal government to allow them to import these many hundreds of women.

• (1545)

I condemn the government for allowing this program to exist. I cannot believe how callous and uncaring it must be.

I am sympathetic to the immigration workers, some of whom have complained to me how terrible they feel about the fact that part of

their job was to enable and facilitate the importation of these women under this visa program.

I have never yet met anyone who was actually stationed in Romania and Hungary, but I have met co-workers who have told me about one particular woman who was stationed there and whose job essentially was to gather up fresh meat for the pornography and prostitution industry in Canada. They have told me how sick to her stomach she felt in exploiting other women in that way, all of it with the royal seal of approval of the Government of Canada.

I am not speaking today in an effort to make us feel bad about ourselves, but I am asking us to take a long, hard look at ourselves. We may feel good and puff our chests up with pride that today we are debating a bill that will in fact address trafficking of humans. We also may say all the right things at public forums and international conventions on this subject. We would be the first at the United Nations to condemn this in the strongest possible terms, I have no doubt, but let us take a hard look at what we have allowed to happen in recent years.

Let me go back again to the one human trafficking issue with which I have in fact been directly involved. That was the issue of what we called economic migrants, who were washing up on the shores of British Columbia, sometimes literally. Sometimes they jumped out of boats which were in fact tied up just a few hundred yards offshore. They were swimming ashore 600 at a time. Those people all claimed refugee status. It took a number of years to work through whether in fact they were legitimate refugees seeking sanctuary or whether they were economic migrants seeking economic opportunities.

As the interviews went forward and as we found out more about these groups, it turned out that they were in fact being trafficked. They were being transported across the world for a fee of as much as \$30,000 to \$40,000. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration took a group of us as a committee to the Chinese port in Fujian province that these people left from, which we had envisioned as a small village where people perhaps had rice paddies with water buffalo and wore those straw hats. In actual fact, it is a city of five million people and has skyscrapers that compete with downtown Toronto's.

The economic migrants being trafficked by illegal snakehead smugglers had the \$30,000 or \$40,000 to give the snakeheads, my point being that it is a very lucrative and profitable enterprise. In fact, there are not many other criminal activities one can undertake in developing nations and third world countries that would pay that kind of return. In a country where \$350 is the average annual income, \$30,000 rivals any trafficking of drugs.

Government Orders

Trafficking in humans, I argue, is more lucrative than the trafficking of any kind of contraband substance, with the possible exception of medicines. I understand that some medical products in fact exceed the profit margin one can make on human beings, but trafficking in human beings is an ancient and evil concept and is certainly one that I support abolishing.

The international community should unite in condemning and squashing the international trafficking and trade of humans, but let us as Canadians go into this with our eyes open and acknowledge and apologize to the international community for the role that we have played in supplying Toronto immigration lawyers with strippers that they could then sell into prostitution and pornography. God knows what has happened to them.

As I condemn those lawyers and I condemn this government, I apologize to the women who have been exploited by the Government of Canada through the exotic dancer program. I hope they are well and have survived their ordeal.

• (1550)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to rise specifically to refute the linkages the member so loosely made with the Romanian strippers' visas and this bill and the trafficking of persons.

I know the member well knows that the bill on the issue of trafficking in persons refers to the recruitment, transportation and harbouring of a person for the purposes of a forced service. People who are coming here from Romania—

An hon. member: Exactly. Your government is guilty.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I am pretty sure the member will get a chance to respond.

I do not think we should mix things up. We are talking about a visa issue. We are talking about the reality that there are strip clubs in Canada and the reality that more strippers are being brought over periodically to provide the services in these institutions. They are coming over under visas. They are providing these services and then they are going back. That is not forced services. He suggested that immigration authorities went over to Romania to somehow force these people to do something.

We should keep Bill C-49 in perspective. We are talking about a very serious issue and the member talked about it to some extent in his speech. We are talking about people who are vulnerable, who cannot protect themselves from these things, who need some way to survive and people take advantage of their vulnerability. That is not the same case. The member, in fairness, should differentiate between visas for people coming over here to work on a part time basis and those vulnerable people around the world and domestically who have been taken advantage of by those committing these abhorrent crimes.

• (1555)

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I remind my colleague from Mississauga that I was trying to point out that the Government of Canada was using, and perhaps still is using, the exact same methodology and modus operandi employed by people in the underworld who do smuggle humans, in that job offers are in fact made. Most people probably came to Canada thinking they were

coming to a legitimate exotic dancing job for above minimum wage and reasonable working conditions. He will be the first to acknowledge, I am sure, being well aware of the subject, that once they got here the situation was very different. Their documents were taken away from them.

The member need not take my word for it. My colleague would be interested in the documentary which recently aired on television and other well documented reports of women who, once they got here, were not paid a fair living wage for legitimate exotic dancing. In fact, their documents were taken away from them, they were locked into rooms, they were forced into aspects of the sex industry beyond what they bargained for. In other words, exotic dancing led to lap dancing, led to pornographic movies, led to prostitution, against their will. As many as 500 disappeared altogether and the Government of Canada has no idea where they are. This is wide scale exploitation of women that matches word for word in modus operandi the way people in the underworld work when they corral women into human trafficking situations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, every day we learn something else that stands our hair on end.

I would like to congratulate the member for Winnipeg Centre. I have been here since 2000, and every time I have been in a parliamentary committee or elsewhere with that hon. member, I have observed that no one could ever say he makes up stories. So we can assume that what he has revealed here is something that he has looked into and that it is real.

I am scandalized. Here we are, in a supposedly developed country, in the year 2005, a country that has long taken pride in calling itself the best in the world. Yet every year, every month, new scandals are being discovered. It is no longer the sponsorship scandal, it is something far more serious. It is the scandal of trafficking in human beings, including trafficking in women for the purposes of prostitution. The member has even said that there were lawyers working for Citizenship and Immigration who own places where these women can be exploited.

Have I understood properly? Does he believe these lawyers are still working for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration or can we assume that this is a past event and hope the matter is now settled? If he feels that it is not, do these lawyers still work for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration?

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and his legitimate concern for the Immigration Canada workers who were put in this terrible position of having to be instruments of collusion to have Canada facilitate the sex trade.

Government Orders

The answer to his question is that the immigration workers I spoke to told me about their colleagues who were stationed in Hungary and Romania to corral these women, give them visas and send them to Canada. They are stationed there to enable the exploitation of women on behalf of Toronto immigration lawyers who own the sex clubs and strip clubs.

I do not know if that particular individual still works for Immigration Canada. What was shared with me is how terrible the workers felt that they were asked to participate in this scandalous exploitation of women. I feel for them. I do not think we should ask any civil servant to knowingly take part in something that is so morally, ethically and fundamentally wrong on so many levels.

● (1600)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the debate all day yesterday and today. I do not want to address the former speaker's comments any further. I think he is just incorrect in his analysis.

I did have the opportunity yesterday to attend a meeting with the families of the four RCMP officers who were slain in Mayerthorpe on March 5. There are a couple of points I would like to make.

This is debate at second reading. The bill will go to committee after this. Debate at second reading is intended to give members the opportunity to put forward some points of view that they would like to have considered at committee. It is extremely important that members, as they hear the debate, participate and ask questions, if not make suggestions for changes as to how we can have an effective piece of legislation. This is a very important bill.

As background for those who may be following this debate, Bill C-49 proposes amendments to the Criminal Code specifically to prohibit trafficking in persons in Canada. This bill is part of our commitment as a government to the protection of vulnerable persons and the ongoing strategy to combat human trafficking which is not only an international activity but also is a domestic activity.

Currently the Criminal Code contains no provisions to specifically prohibit trafficking in persons, although there are a number of offences that are related, such as kidnapping, uttering threats, or extortion, which also play a role in this crime. There is some overlap, but the Criminal Code does not have a specific prohibition on this trafficking.

Yesterday a couple of points were raised that the description of trafficking in persons seems to suggest that these are people who are being bought and sold like slaves. It is more than that. In fact I have suggested that we need to continue to put in the word "exploitation". This is about the exploitation of people. We are talking about the vulnerable, the poor, those who are unable to defend themselves, those who can be coerced. We talk about these issues all the time. We talk about vulnerable seniors, seniors who are abused, seniors who are defrauded of their money. We talk about children's issues and children who are used for pornographic purposes. These are the vulnerable in our society who deserve protection.

There are also people who are subject to these pressures by those who see the weakness, those who see the poverty, those who hold out some hope for someone, take advantage of them and put them in a situation which is certainly no better.

This bill goes beyond the focus of immigration which the prior speaker was talking about. It contains three notable provisions. There are three new indictable offences specifically to address human trafficking.

The main offence is called trafficking in persons. It would prohibit anyone from engaging in specific acts for the purpose of exploiting or facilitating the exploitation of a person. It would carry a maximum penalty, I stress a maximum penalty, of life imprisonment where it involves kidnapping, aggravated assault, sexual assault or death, and imprisonment for 14 years in all other cases.

The second offence would prohibit anyone from receiving financial or other material benefit resulting from the commission of a trafficking offence. It would be punishable by a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment.

The third offence would prohibit the withholding or destroying of documents, such as identification or travel documents, for the purpose of committing or facilitating the commission of a trafficking offence. It would carry a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment.

From the debates yesterday and today, it is clear that this bill has the support of all parties to pass second reading and to go to the committee for its exhaustive study and to hear witnesses to make absolutely sure that this bill is effective.

I am not going to repeat their information, but many members articulated how serious this problem is. In the magnitude of 700,000 people a year may be subject to these trafficking activities.

● (1605)

The United Nations has been a leader on this. Canada finally will play a role by having this legislation in place. One reason is only Canada, the U.S., New Zealand and Australia are taking new immigrants into their countries. There are about 30 other countries that are rampant with the activity of taking advantage of people. With the other three countries, we become the sites of many of these crimes that have been perpetrated. We cannot overstate the seriousness of the problem.

While the parties are very supportive of the bill, and it is important for us to be involved, the debate has included a substantive component of a matter which is beyond the scope of the bill. I am not sure whether it should be, but maybe the committee will be. This is one reason why I wanted to speak.

As I said at the beginning, I had an opportunity yesterday, with a number of our colleagues from the other place and here in the chamber, to meet with the families of the four RCMP officers who were slain on March 3 in Mayerthorpe, Alberta. I want to remind Canadians of their names: Constables Anthony Gordon, Leo Johnston, Brock Myrol and Peter Schiemann.

The families had some messages for the legislators. During the debate, the issues that came up were the frustrations about the criminal justice system. I raised this point in the debate yesterday. Do we have the resources and the means at provincial and federal levels to enforce, to protect and to defend in Bill C-49, should it become law?

Government Orders

I have a good relationship with my chief of police. I know we have a relatively affluent community. Yet our chief of police would say that they do not have enough police officers even to follow up on the reports of suspected grow house operations. Not only can they not investigate and prosecute, they cannot even check them out.

Mr. Merv Tweed: Who funds the RCMP?

Mr. Paul Szabo: This is important. It is not just the RCMP. We are talking about the official provincial police and regional policing authorities that have to enforce the Criminal Code. This is at all levels of government. It is one reason why I wanted to raise and debate the whole question about the criminal justice system as it relates to sentencing, and I hope the committee will deal with it.

The linkage here is to the four slain RCMP officers. Reverend Schiemann spoke to the MPs yesterday about this in our brief meeting. He has said that the person who perpetrated these murders. Mr. Roszko, and I use the word "Mr." very loosely, has a criminal record that would make any common sense person say that he is someone who has a deep problem. The recidivism rate already has been very high. He is a threat to society. Everybody in the community knew that the person was a problem. He had been charged, convicted, put away for a couple of days, then let go and he was back on the streets. It became a game.

How can Canadians have confidence in the laws of Canada if they know that the application and the defence of those laws only goes so far as the police will lay charges and the person will have a criminal record, but the individual will be back on the street again?

I understand very well why the families are saying that they need the federal government to help them make reasonable changes to the laws so that dangerous people are not out on the streets, that they are not there to perpetrate even further crimes to do the damage to these families, their friends and their communities such as happened with the senseless murder of four RCMP constables, human beings with families.

• (1610)

Members of the justice committee are here today. Notwithstanding that Bill C-49 prescribes that there are penalties to a maximum of, et cetera, it is about time we have some real discussions about mandatory sentencing.

There was an incident in Toronto not too long ago. It was just discharged by the courts. It involved a police officer who was charged with sucker-punching a refugee. Right out of the blue, he gave him a whack. The officer received a sentence of 30 days in jail. It should have been a lot more given the circumstances. He denied it, but someone came forward with a film of the incident. Now the police unions are going to appeal this because he is a good guy and his wife is going to have a baby. I understand there are always mitigating circumstances, but when a person in a position of trust violates the rights of a human being, we need to deal with that firmly. A 30 day sentence says to that person that he is going to jail for a sucker punch.

If we look at Mr. Roszko's rap sheet, we see how much time he has spent in jail. The system basically said that he had a problem, that he had done this or that and that his criminal record was very long. However, he was out on the streets before we could blink. He

went back into the community and was a risk to people of his community. Everyone knew it would happen again, but no one knew it would be that bad on March 5 when four RCMP officers were slain needlessly because the criminal justice system and the courts let them down.

We are the legislators. We are the people who make laws that affect the Criminal Code. This is affecting the Criminal Code. The bill does not talk about sentencing. We do not have a lot to do other than prescribing maximums. More and more members in this place comment on grow ops. People who have grow ops with 3,000 plants get slapped with an \$1,800 fine and a suspended sentence. We know very well that major grow operations are generating cash for organized crime, for serious criminal activity. When people have more than a plant or two, it clearly is not for their own use. I do not want to debate where to draw the line, but when there are hundreds and thousands of plants, I want to see people go to jail.

We seem to have an aversion to putting people away when they commit serious crimes. We do not talk about this enough. Would someone please make a case to the Speaker that we need an emergency debate, or at least a take note debate, on the sentencing in the criminal justice system. Let us talk about it and see what our parliamentarians have to say. This is a very important issue because families are hurting each and every day.

I do not want to start picking holes. We all understand that we collectively are the lawmakers of Canada. I believe it is a priority. We should talk about this and put it on the table. When the judges and people in positions of trust and authority hear what Parliament has to say about the sentencing track record for serious and violent crime and how we feel about this, even without passing a law, they will look twice and think twice.

• (1615)

We need to take some leadership, too, if things are not happening in the courts and through our judges. I believe very firmly that we can make a difference, and I wanted to raise it in this debate. It is not really a major part of Bill C-49. It is not.

If somebody gets up on a point of order to say that this is not relevant, it was very relevant to the families yesterday. I went there to support them personally. I listened to them. I do not support Bill C-17, which includes the decriminalization of marijuana. I voted against it the last time and I will vote against it again. That is only part of it because that gives the wrong signal.

I think we also give the wrong signal through our legislation. Even though the amendments to the Criminal Code must prescribe penalties, we need to have some real direction to the courts through the criminal justice system. I do not know from where it is being driven. I am not a lawyer. I am not a member of the justice committee. I listened to the people yesterday and I listen to my constituents. I know there is a legitimate concern that should be dealt with in Parliament, and I want that.

I am sorry that what I said has not been relevant to the bill, but I wanted to raise the issue because it is important to Canadians.

Government Orders

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard the latter part of the member's comments in reference to the trafficking in persons issue in the bill. I know he digressed, which is fine. It is appropriate for him to digress as we are talking about Criminal Code matters.

This party, starting from the Reform Party to the Alliance Party and now the Conservative Party, has always brought put this issue in the House. We are very concerned about the safety and security of members of our country. It was an issue back in 1993, it was an issue in 2000 and it is an issue now. In fact, it is even more grave now because numerous legislation that has come through the House.

In 1993 we went directly to the justice minister of the day, Mr. Allan Rock. We asked him what his priorities were and we showed him a list of our priorities. One of them dealt with the Young Offenders Act. That was the huge issue of the day.

His issues were completely unrelated to anything that was of concern to the average person in Canada. First and foremost, he would ensure that the issue on homosexuality would be brought forward. The second was to take power away from police officers in situations of high speed chases. Those two big things he saw as important, and it has digressed from there when it comes to issues of security.

Yes, there is a legislative answer to the issue of security, and I will ask the member a question about it. If he is so concerned about issues of security, not just the shooting of the RCMP officers, which was captured in the news over the last three weeks or a month, why is he not twisting the arms of the members of his cabinet who are roadblocks to putting sound legislation forward in the House?

The people of the nation want some assurances from their government that it is looking after this. Why is the member not spending his time beating up on them instead of the people over here?

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I think I understand where the member is coming from. I am not sure that the member is aware of what I have been doing on this but I can assure him that I have had these conversations with the justice minister and the Deputy Prime Minister in her role in terms of security issues.

I raised this issue because it came up in debate. Even the justice critic from the Conservative Party raised the matters of the sentence and stuff. I do not accept the rationalization that mandatory minimum sentencing does not work and is not a deterrent. I am not as concerned about deterrence as I am about someone who commits a serious violent crime. They need to be in jail to have the cold shower that being incarcerated brings. They need to know that as a society we believe that what they did was abhorrent and that this is part of the penalty. We know that a guy like Roszko, should not have been on the streets. The system let the families down because it did not deal with Roszko, the way he should have been dealt with.

I raised this issue and I am asking other members to join with me to ensure they do what they can in whatever venues they can to influence the discussions, even at the justice committee when this legislation comes before it, so that the issues that are ancillary or related to Bill C-49 may bring some movement in terms of effective legislation and amendments to the Criminal Code.

•(1620)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a specific question about Bill C-49 and I preface it only by saying that my colleague from Mississauga is aware of how rare it is for white collar crime to earn jail time. Much of his speech was about sentencing and jail time and a lot of us were shocked at the relatively light sentence that Mr. Paul Coffin received. Maybe all those jail cells are needed for some Indian guy who steals a loaf of bread. Maybe there is no room in the prisons for a white collar criminal who steals \$1.5 million.

I will ask my colleague to contemplate Bill C-49 specifically. I would like to read one clause and then I will ask him about it. Clause 279.01(1) reads:

Every person who recruits, transports, transfers, receives, holds, conceals or harbours a person...for the purpose of exploiting them...is guilty of an indictable offence and liable

(a) to life imprisonment....

How often do we see that as a penalty in our Criminal Code?

Does my colleague believe that clause in Bill C-49 should apply for instance to those involved in the exploitation of women and the Canadian strippergate visa scandal if proven guilty?

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the member should read the clause fully and correctly when talking about sentencing. It says:

...if they kidnap, commit an aggravated assault or aggravated sexual assault against, or cause death to, the victim during the commission of the offence;

The member does this a lot. He is very selective in his facts so I will not comment any further. The member should ask another question and be a little bit more accurate in posing it.

Last Saturday I had the opportunity to attend the Mississauga community crime awareness campaign in which the same kind of issues came up in the communities. It was sponsored, incidentally, by Mr. Victor Oh, president of the Mississauga Chinese Business Association. The police, the crime prevention association and city officials were there. It was interesting to note that one of the things they found was a strong co-relationship between a vibrant crime prevention and awareness program within communities and the level of crime. That is one of the reasons that the city of Mississauga has the lowest crime rate of any community in the country, even though it is next door to Toronto which has one of the highest.

•(1625)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am looking for a point of clarification in one of the member's earlier comments. He said that he was less concerned with deterrence than he was with incarceration.

Government Orders

While I totally agree with the member that appropriate sentences should be levied against violent criminals or criminals of any sort, does he not believe that perhaps deterrence would be as important, if not more important, than actual sentences? I would love to see nothing more than less crime committed, whether it be violent crimes, drug related crimes or whatever. I believe that if there were severe deterrence this might actually affect that cause and there may be less crime.

I would be very interested in a clarification by the member as to his views on deterrence as opposed to incarceration and sentencing.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, when I said it I knew it did not come out quite right.

The Minister of Justice has often said that mandatory minimum sentencing is not an effective deterrent. What I think I should have said, and the member is quite right, is that I was not focusing in on the issue of deterrence. I was trying to say that I still want someone to go to jail when they commit a serious crime.

Deterrence, obviously, is extremely important. I thank the member for the opportunity to clarify that. However I believe that mandatory minimum sentences in certain cases, and certainly in the case of a guy like Roszko, should have been there. He should have been there long enough to find out whether or not this was a case where this person could in fact under certain circumstances be held in custody for an extended period until there was satisfaction that he could be released safely back into the community.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, Agriculture.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that I can get on the speaking list in reference to this issue of trafficking in persons, Bill C-49.

It is interesting that right now in the subcommittee there is a major discussion going on concerning this whole issue of prostitution. It started out just relating to solicitation as it happens on the streets of our cities and elsewhere in the country and its impact on the safety of women, and men I guess to some degree but mostly women in this nation, as it applies to whether the laws are placing them in harm's way.

The debate widened very quickly and included the whole issue of trafficking. The reason that it took that route is because it became clear in the nations that decriminalized or legalized prostitution that the efforts to control that activity on the streets opened another door, that door being another brand of illegal prostitution springing up for those who did not fit into the pattern or the mould as set by the state. Therefore the issue of illegal prostitution expanding became the focus.

Who is involved in the expansion of that prostitution, that other aspect of illegal prostitution? There are several jurisdictions in the world that tried to decriminalize or legalize prostitution and authorities found that women were being hustled into the illegal side of prostitution and many of them from out of the country. In other words, there was a trafficking process that was set up from various parts of the world bringing women and children for that

matter into those jurisdictions that had decriminalized or legalized the activity.

What is wrong with the picture? On one side, the government is moving toward the legalization of prostitution or decriminalization, whichever way it wants to call it. It is part and parcel of the debate that we are having in the committee. Once that is done, the illegal trade and the trafficking of women and children will increase in a very dramatic fashion.

Australia and New Zealand went through it. The Netherlands went through it and it is a prime example of what not to do. The only nation that did not and in fact started cracking down on those who were engaged in the activity of prostitution and trafficking, which is the organized criminal side of it, was Sweden. It not only cracked down on the pimps but it also cracked down on the johns, those who exploited women. Lo and behold, many of Sweden's problems disappeared. The numbers of women involved in that whole area of prostitution diminished dramatically because the jurisdiction took care of it. It took the money out of it and away from organized criminals.

We have Bill C-49 that proposes to step down on those involved in trafficking. At the same time this other debate is going on. For the most part I can see the real advantage of having some tough law, if we want to call this tough law. There are no minimum sentences in the law but at least it would address some of these concerns. It proposes up to life sentences for those who recruit, transport, transfer, receive, conceal harbour or exercise some control or influence over them.

• (1630)

On the surface it looks good, but we have the same problem here as we do with other pieces of legislation from the government. There are no minimum sentences to guarantee that the courts will deal aggressively with individuals who involve themselves this way. There is nothing to guarantee that and the argument of course on the other side is that the court must have all the discretion it needs to deal with whatever case may come up, and it is up to the judge to exercise that discretion.

We have heard that story far too many times. It washes kind of thin when we start looking at the results of legislation that does not aggressively deal with a growing problem within the international community.

Trafficking in people, just like drugs, is considered one of the largest sources of profits for organized crime. In our committee when we started talking about this whole matter of organized crime, nobody wanted to address it. In fact, it was almost a taboo subject because the issue of prostitution was considered by some, unfortunately, as a legitimate occupation to pursue and should be protected like any other legitimate occupation. It was the flawed thinking of some members within that committee. Most of them just so happened to be Liberals or NDP members who thought that prostitution was a legitimate form of work to be protected by the state.

Government Orders

To look at it from that point of view we would have move into the direction of legalization or decriminalization of prostitution. It would be a very dangerous route to go, I might point out, looking at the jurisdictions that have already experienced such a downtrend to this whole issue. Organized criminals step into the breach and they will reap the profits in tens of billions of dollars that it will bring, all at the expense of women and those who abuse women.

My concern of course is that this not get a foothold in this country. The bill certainly addresses a point or two when it comes to trafficking in people, but it does not deal with the issue once those individuals are here clearly in real terms engaged in an illegal activity in the nation.

Yes, we can support the bill. There are some provisions in it that deal with the reality of trafficking, the forced coercion or deception and the issue of forced labour or forced prostitution, but it does not connect when it comes to the other debate that is going on in the justice subcommittee dealing with the prostitution issue.

I have a couple of questions for the members on the other side and I want to put them on the record. If this country were to decide to decriminalize prostitution, how many members on that side would agree that it would lead to increased trafficking in persons, especially women and children?

Members on that side will probably not be able to answer that question or maybe will not want to answer that question, but it is the only question that bears the need for an answer.

• (1635)

Let us talk about sentencing. It was not long ago when an issue of drugs entered the debate in the House and in fact it even hit the media in this fashion. Some suggested that the serious drug dealer, the one who makes sure that crystal meth and others are distributed to our youngsters, receive a life sentence. There was outrage from members on that side and they said, "A life sentence. How absolutely archaic". That mantra was kind of picked up by the media. Fingers were pointed to members on this side, accusing them of being somewhat extreme, or dinosaurs or whatever.

I see drugs destroying the lives of many of our young people in this nation. In fact, that has happened and continues to happen. There is no serious legislative effort to shut it down. I am talking about the bills and the suggestions about decriminalizing marijuana for one and really seriously dealing with the grow op situation in the nation. We have no national drug strategy. In fact, we do not even have, and again this relates directly to this bill, any organized crime strategy. How are we going to deal with the organized crime issues?

I find it appalling that there is so much organized criminal activity. I have seen it creep into my own city over the last five years in very real terms and how insidious it is, how devastating it is to a community, and how many police resources are involved in trying to combat this kind of not only violent but insidious type of crime that works on prostitution, drug distribution and the like. There is no clear national strategy on drugs.

Now we have an issue dealing with people and again, it is organized crime that is at the foot of it, the foundation. I have a concern because the Liberal cabinet and the majority of members

over there cannot put this into perspective. I would like to know why?

However, getting back to sentencing, it states that for the purposes of anyone who recruits, transports, transfers, conceals or harbours a person or who exercises control or influence over the movement of that person for the purposes of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation commits an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for up to 14 years or life imprisonment if the accused kidnaps, commits an aggravated assault or sexual assault, or causes death to the victim.

I do not feel exactly confident that this matter is being dealt with in real terms again. A life sentence was pooh-poohed because a life sentence was suggested for drug traffickers and now all of a sudden, it appears here in another form. But again, it is at the discretion of a judge, and who knows where it will end up. Even if all of these heinous acts are committed against an individual or a group of individuals, there nothing to suggest that individual would receive a life sentence.

Then it comes to the section on money, the issue that makes this organized criminal activity go round and round in circles. It is involved in the drug business. It is involved in the prostitution business and of course the issue of trafficking in people.

• (1640)

We know that even cross-border trafficking is taking place. It was pointed out to the Liberal government that this had been going on and even where it had been going on, and still it was never addressed over all the years. It continues on to this day. There is a fee. There is a charge for moving a person across the border.

Even though that is the illegal side of it, there is a legal side too that is also playing hand in glove with those who want to traffic in people, and that is our immigration department. What is the immigration department going to do? If it is willing to open the doors to strippers and prostitutes of various kinds and claim what they do to be a legitimate form of work, then it is a party to what happens afterwards. I find that appalling, given the fact that it is a government department. I might also point out that ministers of the past here, ministers of the Crown, have even gone to bat for this so-called legitimate occupation. That is where the thinking is.

I urge my colleagues on the other side to deal with this in a much more effective manner. There seems to be a cross purpose of one side wanting to legalize prostitution, knowing that it will increase trafficking in women and children, and the other side wanting to crack down on some of the traffickers, if that in fact can even happen. I would like to see how the final ploy of this legislation really does come about when it hits the law books and the enforcement agencies in our nation.

• (1645)

Mr. Randy White (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this particular bill, which I addressed last night, gives me great concern about maximum penalties. Maximum penalties in this bill are 10 years for one instance, 5 years for another and life for another.

Government Orders

However, as we have seen in this country, in courtrooms right across this land, maximums are seldom if ever given. In fact, there is a disproportionate penalty-crime ratio, and in many cases where families and victims think that some individuals are getting a serious penalty for a crime, they do not get it. Drugs in particular are some of the worst, where we see \$400,000 and \$500,000 grow ops and individuals getting a \$500 fine for them. If I ever saw motivation for such a criminal activity, that would be it.

I would like to ask my colleague what he thinks the rationale is behind the government issuing these maximum penalties? Recently the government stood and said it was getting serious with the crystal meth business and would issue some maximum penalties when it knows full well, as in the courts in particular in British Columbia, that the penalties even for crystal meth production are very low.

I would like him to explain the rationale to the people watching this, not necessarily to the other side because I do not think those members will ever understand it. Could he perhaps give us an idea of how we can get around this inability to get the judges and the lawyers in the land to commit to discretionary decision-making that is conservative as opposed to lucrative for the criminal?

Mr. Art Hanger: Mr. Speaker, the member for Abbotsford has contributed a great deal, both in this country and this House, to the issue of sentencing and the issue of the drug debate and the lack of drug law enforcement in this country. I appreciate his question.

By the way, what is the rationale? I would like to poll the members across to see if there is some sort of consensus about why there are low sentences even though legislation may come out with maximums that sound really tough. What is really behind that? The rhetoric makes it sound tough, but when it comes to the reality of the way the courts work in our nation, will tough sentences ever be delivered? Is that what is behind this?

I go back to the days of the Trudeau era of the Liberal government and men like Warren Allmand wanting to cut the feet out from underneath sound judicial reasoning. If we want to talk about changing the sentencing program, we just have to look at that man to see what he has done in this nation, all the way from murder on down.

At that time capital punishment was still around. He rationalized it away. People in this country were never consulted, but he rationalized it away, saying that we could not put a man in jail for life. It is a waste of a life, he said. I think those were his words.

As a result, he threw in the faint hope clause and down came the sentencing. At that time he laid down the law and shaped the future of what this country was going to look like from the judicial and the sentencing points of view. Shame on him, for he has jeopardized the safety of so many. I think that is really the philosophical root of what we see today. Unless somebody else explains otherwise to me, that is what I believe has happened.

• (1650)

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently a court ruled on a sentence for someone who pleaded guilty in the ad scam scandal, in which there was theft of something like a million and a half dollars. The court said, "This man has been a good man. He has never committed crimes before. We will just send him

home and we will let him give lectures on ethics to students at universities. That is what we are going to do". That was his sentence for stealing a million and a half dollars.

I would like the member to comment again on minimum sentences. The minister says he is not going to go that way because it has not worked in other countries. Let us look at the section of Bill C-49 that was read out by the member for Winnipeg Centre. It talks about very serious offences. It says what the penalties are. It has been quoted several times. People can be sentenced to life imprisonment, but there is no minimum sentence. There is no guidance to the court, so someone could commit a very serious offence and some hotshot lawyer could come into the courtroom and say, "This is a good man. He has never done this before. Let us send him home". And the man will spend his sentence at home.

I would ask the member to elaborate further on what he thinks about these minimum sentences that members on our side of the House have been talking about.

Mr. Art Hanger: Mr. Speaker, I believe the whole issue of minimum sentences came up as a result of legislation in the past, which eliminated, or which confused, and I guess that might be a better way of putting it, this whole issue of consequences for one's actions. Before then, the law took care of that. The law said that if we broke the law or rule we would pay a price for it. That ruled the courtroom. I was a police officer during those years to see it. There was precedent. There were issues that dealt specifically with the crime. Yes, the judge had discretion, but he looked at the safety of the individuals, the safety of the community and the consequences to fit the act that was committed.

There does not seem to be that philosophy anymore in the whole issue of judicial decisions. In fact, it is almost like situational ethics. Let us talk about a lawyer. I was going to say a Philadelphia lawyer, but how about a Bay Street lawyer? A lawyer would come in and say, "Look, this guy did this because of these reasons and any normal person would do the same thing". Maybe that is stretching it a little bit, but the argument is there: it is that situation and it warrants a different judgment so there is no consistency anymore. Once a precedent is set, even a new precedent, in any law or any case, then suddenly that becomes the issue for the entire court to follow. It just deteriorates over time.

Why are minimum sentences now the topic of discussion? Because it is the only way to hold accountable—something that our government will not do—those courts that decide these are frivolous matters and warrant only minor sentences. On this side of the House, we want to ensure that there is some sort of consequence to the action of an individual. I do not know what the members on the other side think, but that is what is behind minimum sentences. I believe that even legislation like Bill C-49 should be addressing these matters clearly.

• (1655)

The Deputy Speaker: The time for questions and comments has expired.

On a point of order, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

*Government Orders***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Hon. Raymond Simard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Internal Trade, Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I think you would find unanimous consent to adopt the following order: That the speech of Her Excellency, the Governor General, together with the address of welcome made by the Prime Minister in the Senate chamber on September 27, 2005, be printed as an appendix to the official report of debates of the House of Commons and form part of the permanent record of this Parliament.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (trafficking in persons), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

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

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CRIMINAL CODE

(Bill C-53. On the Order: Government Orders:)

May 30, 2005—the Minister of Justice—Second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness of Bill C-53, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (proceeds of crime) and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make consequential amendments to another act.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (for the Minister of Justice) moved:

That Bill C-53, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (proceeds of crime) and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make consequential amendments to another act, be referred forthwith to the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in debate on Bill C-53, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (proceeds of crime) and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make consequential amendments to another act.

[*Translation*]

First and foremost, this bill seeks to amend the Criminal Code to put in place a reverse onus with respect to certain proceeds of crime applications. The new measures would apply to those convicted of a criminal organization offence or a serious drug offence and will provide that, subject to certain conditions, the property of such an offender identified by the Crown can be forfeited by order of a court unless the offender proves that the property is not the proceeds of crime.

In effect, these new provisions would add a new, more aggressive forfeiture method to the Criminal Code, in addition to the proceeds of crime forfeiture provisions that already exist.

This legislation also makes a number of corrective amendments to the current forfeiture of crime provisions for the purpose of ensuring clarity in these provisions.

The proposed new reverse-onus forfeiture power under Bill C-53 builds upon the current proceeds of crime scheme in the Criminal Code.

The current provisions originate from legislation put in place in 1989. They are part of the criminal process that comes into play when a court is imposing sentence on an offender. At their core, they are fundamentally designed to put in practice the straightforward principle that crime ought not to pay.

By allowing the government to claim the proceeds of crime, these provisions directly attack the illicit economic gain that is the prime motivation of many types of criminal activity, especially organized crime activity.

As such, proceeds of crime legislation is absolutely vital in helping to deter this type of crime and to undermine the criminal groups that are responsible for it.

● (1700)

[*English*]

These proceeds of crime provisions are found at part XII.2 of the Criminal Code. They allow for the forfeiture of proceeds upon application by the Crown after a conviction for an indictable offence under federal law, other than a small number of offences exempted by regulation. These offences, for which this current procedure is available, are referred to as designated offences under the code.

Currently, in order to obtain forfeiture the Crown must show on a balance of probabilities that the property is the proceeds of crime and the property is connected to the crime for which the person was convicted. Alternatively, the Crown can also obtain forfeiture even if no connection between the particular offence and the property is established, provided that the court is nevertheless satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that the property is proceeds of crime.

Government Orders

Attached to these existing forfeiture tools are other related powers. These include, for example, powers allowing special search warrants to find property that may be proceeds of crime; the powers of restraint and seizure of property pending resolution of criminal proceedings to ensure that the property does not disappear before a possible forfeiture order; and provisions for court proceedings to permit relief from forfeiture where appropriate in order to ensure the protection of legitimate interests in property, including third party interests.

These existing proceeds of crime measures have proven to be fair and effective powers under the Criminal Code. However, there are strong arguments that they have not been effective enough.

While Canadian authorities have managed to seize, restrain and ultimately forfeit substantial suspected criminal assets, these amounts are believed to represent a relatively small proportion of the total amount of proceeds of criminal activity in Canada.

Organized crime groups in particular are believed to have control of sizeable financial assets that are the product of illicit financial activity that have not successfully been recovered by Canadian authorities. There is a substantial international dimension in this as well, as criminal groups transfer illicit gains out of the country, or indeed, transfer illicit gains from activities in other countries into Canada.

While our current proceeds of crime provisions are effective, the government is of the view that they can and should be improved upon, especially in relation to organized crime. We must build upon the current provisions in order to make them more effective. In particular, there are limitations in the way the current provisions operate that create barriers for police and prosecutors.

While criminal organizations are believed to be involved in numerous offences leading to substantial illicit material gain, convictions are typically obtained only with respect to a small number of offences. It is not always the case that these offences have associated proceeds.

For example, if such a criminal is convicted of murder, no particular proceeds will in general be associated with that one offence. Even for other types of offences that often do involve economic gain, such as drug trafficking, it frequently is the case that arrests will take place just before a major drug transaction takes place. While the organization itself likely will have been involved in numerous other trafficking activities, the particular offence for which the person is charged in that case would have involved an offer to traffic, for which there may be few or no related proceeds. Even where conviction does take place for an offence for which there are related proceeds, and forfeiture of these proceeds is possible, the particular offence and associated proceeds will very often only represent a small proportion of the total offences and illicit accumulation of property for which the criminal organization is responsible.

● (1705)

This means that the Crown often has to rely on the second branch of the current proceeds test, requiring proof beyond a reasonable doubt that the property is nevertheless the proceeds of criminal offences. This often means that even after a successful prosecution,

there is a prospect of substantial additional proceeds litigation with sometimes doubtful prospects of success to obtain property, which in the organized crime context very much appears from the outset to be proceeds of crime.

It is for this reason that a new reverse onus proceeds of crime forfeiture power is needed. It is the view of the government that there are certain criminal circumstances under which it is legitimate to presume that the identified assets of an offender are proceeds of crime. Of course, it should still be open to an offender to prove on a balance of probabilities that assets are in fact not proceeds of crime. However, failing such proof, the property should be forfeited by the order of the court. This is the basis of the proposed new power under Bill C-53.

This is a type of procedure that has already been adopted in a number of other democracies in respect of proceeds of crime. It is a power that federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for justice have identified as needed in Canada as well.

I believe that this initiative has considerable support within this House. I urge all members to work together to ensure that it is passed as soon as possible.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find this legislation interesting in the sense that quite a battle has raged onward with law enforcement and its legislators in trying to address the whole issue of proceeds.

I remember as a serving officer that in an investigation there was always this matter of trying to seize the goods, whether it was a drug trafficker or some other organized criminal group. There were so many loopholes in the law that many of the organized criminal groups or individuals would simply sign their proceeds over to their lawyer and the Crown could not touch them. For the most part I think that is basically where the legislation sits today.

The other part of it was an issue that would deal with perishable seizures. For instance, there were individuals who went into ranching. Perhaps they would have 500 head of cattle. All the cattle were bought with illicit money from the drug trade. How does one look after 500 head of cattle? Who looks after 500 head of cattle? Is the Crown responsible for looking after 500 head of cattle? The issue became a moot point because nobody wanted to do it. Of course the proceeds would slip away and again end up in the hands of the lawyer who was defending the person.

I am curious. When it comes to an outright seizure, what does the state have to do to prove that the goods were obtained through illegal activity? What hoops does the Crown have to jump through? The legislation can say a certain thing, but until we see it all played out on the ground, we will not really know how effective it is going to be.

● (1710)

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin: Mr. Speaker, the principle being advanced here is very clear and distinct in what we are really trying to say. I agree with the hon. member to the extent that if we can take the profits out of crime, then there really is not any particular reason for pursuing that sort of activity.

Government Orders

With respect to the member's specific concerns about the ability of our legal system to trace money and to hold money, there are in place already certain provisions that will permit that money to be held, and even if it could be shown to be in the lawyer's hands, to be held pending the hearing process.

The other option that is offered in this legislation that is of some interest to the member is that first of all, in order for the reverse onus to apply, the Crown would first be required to prove, on a balance of probabilities, either that the offender engaged in a pattern of criminal activity for the purpose of receiving a material benefit or—and here is the one that likely comes closer to fitting the member's concern—that the legitimate income of the offender cannot reasonably account for all of the offender's property.

This is broad and far-reaching. It goes well beyond the present legislation where we are limited really to the proceeds of that particular act of criminality, unless we can prove beyond a reasonable doubt that something did come from and can be identified as proceeds of crime by itself.

The member's concerns are legitimate. It is something that should be raised at committee. We should ask the experts to make sure that they have the tools in place to allow for the tracing and following of moneys. I believe that this new bill will really go a long way toward taking profit out of crime. Then I think we will see some positive results in terms of our law enforcement.

Mr. Randy White (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we in the Conservative Party support Bill C-53. I want to make a couple of comments about things that take place in the real world outside Parliament because I spend a fair bit of time on street issues.

The hon. member on the other side talked about organized crime groups having substantial assets. I along with many other people really wonder what it is going to take in Canada to get organized crime groups off the streets.

We watch every day as the Hells Angels parade around the country with their nice jackets and their bikes and that sort of thing. Now they are disguising themselves by wearing suits. We are still allowing these people to rove around the country like they are some kind of bicycle heroes, but that is not the case. Those people are selling drugs to our kids. They are involved in prostitution. They are involved in all kinds of crime, and yet we tolerate their existence. I have a hard time with that quite frankly, and it is difficult to believe that it even happens.

Bill C-53 is important, but it is also important to follow up on my colleague's comments. This should not just be about the seizure of assets, because it is after the assets are seized that one of the biggest problems begins. I am going to cover several instances that I have been involved with just to give the House some examples. I also want to mention the contradiction in our laws today with respect to things like seizing assets.

I am very much involved in the debate about harm reduction in drugs, which of course is not harm reduction but rather harm extension. Harm reduction extends the use of drugs. It does not reduce the harm at all, as we will find out too late one day. Harm reduction involves injection sites, needle exchanges, crack inhalation sites, issuance of heroin to individuals, and the legalization of

marijuana. Lately it also involves roving injection teams in Vancouver, if anybody has ever heard of anything so absurd.

Roving injection teams involve addicts who rove the streets and back alleys with needles to inject incapacitated addicts because they are too incapacitated to inject themselves. Not too long ago that was called attempted murder. When individuals walk into an injection site with illegal drugs in their hands, one has to wonder why there is some kind of free bubble zone to allow that when we are supposedly saying those kind of drugs are illegal to possess. The government has to get out of its schizophrenic mode where basically it is saying that drugs are against the law, but it is okay to break the law.

That is my preamble to my examples of this bill, which is really talking about seizure of assets, and it is a good thing.

Not too long ago there was a drug bust. It not only included drugs, but about eight or ten feet away in the rafters there was about \$400,000 all wrapped up in plastic which the police took out of the building. This case went to court and the judge, in his infinite wisdom, gave all the money back to the dealers because they said they did not know it was there, that it was just something that must have been up in the rafters. Poor dears. He virtually gave the drug dealers \$400,000 because in that courtroom with that defence lawyer, they did the wrong thing. They went after the defence of that drug money.

●(1715)

Although we have laws in this country, the problem is that lawyers on the defence side and the judges making the decisions are making the wrong decisions applicable to laws like this. It is not just the law that has seizure of assets that is important, it is the application of the law within the courtroom. I do not know what it is going to take for us in our society to go to the defence lawyers and say that we all have a problem, that for goodness' sake they know where the \$400,000 has come from. It cannot be given back to the dealers. They would just use it to buy and sell again.

I cannot say how many times I have been involved in situations where money has been seized, put in trust because it cannot be given back to the dealers, when in fact the lawyers can get their hands on it. They go in on behalf of the dealers, charge a fee of the amount that is in the trust account, get all the money out of the trust account, give part of it back to the dealers and keep a good chunk of change for themselves. Those lawyers out there know who I am talking about. That is trafficking. It is wrong. It is stupid. It is not just a matter of setting a law to seize assets, it is the application of the law after it is made. These laws are not made to be broken or challenged. They are not made to have application under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They are made to prevent illegal use of money.

Government Orders

How do these guys get around it? I have mentioned before that recently a young man was kidnapped in my community. He was thrown into a van and pistol whipped. This sounds like something out of *Terminator II* in the United States. He was in the van which was involved in a high-speed chase with the police. The bad guys drove through a stoplight and killed a woman who was entering the intersection on a green light. They rolled the van and took off from the scene of the accident. It was a hit and run. Four of them were caught. All four were charged. They had guns, money and drugs in the car.

I was in the courtroom. They dropped all charges against three of them who said they did not know the other guy, that they did not know there was money in the van or to whom the drugs and gun belonged. It is the application of the laws. I do not know what it is in the House. We develop good laws and they are broken all the time.

There was hardly enough room around the front of the bench for lawyers because there were so many of them. Quite frankly it was a laughing stock of a zoo. Ultimately the driver of the vehicle was charged with dangerous driving. There were no gun charges. Everything was dropped.

The guy who was kidnapped, who was a witness, was asked what he did. He said, "I deliver". "What do you deliver?" "Drugs". He was asked if he liked that and he said no because his supervisor put him on the midnight shift from dial-a-dope.

These stories sound bizarre, but they are in fact true. What I am saying in the House of Commons is that while we have a bill we support, we have to approach those in the legal industry and tell them to apply this the right way and not to abuse where our intentions are going.

● (1720)

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly enjoyed the presentation by the distinguished member. He referred to organized crime. I have a different situation in my riding which I would like him to comment on.

He is familiar with the community of Stewiacke in Nova Scotia. Recently there was a meeting of town council and dozens of concerned citizens about the high level of theft, crime and vandalism in the area and the lack of police enforcement. It turns out that the RCMP detachment in Stewiacke was closed many months ago because of a mould problem. In May the RCMP moved into a temporary facility, but it is still sitting there vacant and unusable by the RCMP. The lack of RCMP has resulted in an increase in crime. There is almost a crime wave in Stewiacke.

I met with the Department of Public Works and it turns out that it is that department's responsibility to upgrade it. It does not know yet what level to upgrade it. Today I met with the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Public Works and they are sorting out how to get this temporary facility up and running. Meanwhile the people in Stewiacke fear for their well-being, their safety and their lives. This appears to be a very lax attitude toward law enforcement and penalties for crime in general.

At the meeting in Stewiacke about a week ago, time and again it came up that the youth justice act does not work and that there is

very little in the way of penalties for people, both youth and adults, who do commit crimes.

I wonder if the member would comment on the lax attitude of the Liberals toward law enforcement and penalties.

● (1725)

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, I think this is my 12th year in this place and I have been on this justice issue for all 12 years. I came here and wrote the victims' bill of rights and the sex offender registry initially. I still see things getting worse. As much as the government writes bills, a lot of the issues are not being addressed. My friend Chuck Cadman spent a lot of time on the young offenders act, and it was changed, but there are still many problems unaddressed in the youth justice act. We are miles behind the drug issue in this House, from all sides. The government is supposed to take the initiative. We are miles behind these things.

I do not understand, and I suppose I will leave this House not understanding, why it is that a government can sit in office and be so far behind the real world out there. I know there is a philosophical difference between the Conservatives' approach to justice and the Liberals' approach to justice, but it cannot possibly be that wide a gap. The issues we are talking about here are common to everybody, such as the support of our police and the justice issue.

Everybody in this House knows that the the time put in for the crimes today is not what it should be. Yet on the other side we hear comments like, "We have to use judicial discretion". We have tried judicial discretion. It is not working. Just go to British Columbia please, and look at the record. I can refer to thousands of cases to show the record. There is a problem.

It is getting pretty close to the time when we will insist on minimum sentences in this country. If the Liberals are not prepared to do that, then there should be sentencing grids. If they are not prepared to do that, then they should be prepared to look for election of judges or appointments of judges for a shorter period. This is being forced on our society because of inaction across the way with the Liberal government. It is coming.

The Liberals might smile at that little comment, but if they do not take action, this side will be government one day and all of the things that the Liberals failed to do are going to be implemented. I do not know how we are going to treat, ultimately, this discretion of judges, but somewhere along the line society here in this country will insist on those three actions. One precipitates the other. If they do not do one thing, then they should get used to the other one.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, would the member comment on the reverse onus section that is in the bill? As I understand it, for the reverse onus section to apply, the Crown has to prove on the balance of probabilities that the offender has engaged in a pattern of criminal activity and the court then makes a ruling to seize whatever the material is.

As one of my colleagues has said that it is some reverse onus clause. This is the first thing that has to happen. The Crown has to prove on the balance of probabilities that either the offender engaged in a pattern of criminal activity for the purpose of receiving material benefit or the legitimate income of the offender cannot reasonably account for all the offender's property.

After the court makes the ruling, then comes what I gather the government calls the reverse onus clause. The offender has to prove on the balance of probabilities that the property is not from the proceeds of crime.

What does the member think of the reverse onus clause?

• (1730)

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, in effect the onus is still on the Crown to prove that it has a repeat offender, more or less. In most cases that money is not found with a repeat offender. This is somebody who is sent out with little or no record. There will be a big problem resulting from that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): It being 5:30 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

QUEENSWAY CARLETON HOSPITAL

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider transferring the land currently leased by the Queensway-Carleton Hospital from the National Capital Commission to the Hospital at a cost of one dollar.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is often that we rise in this House to discuss matters of important national character. Today I have the distinguished pleasure of speaking on a matter of local importance to my constituents. It pertains to the Queensway Carleton Hospital, which sits about three minutes outside the constituency I represent and services a catchment area, including roughly 400,000 people, some of whom are in the most aging demographic in the whole country. This is a hospital that provides indispensable care to constituents throughout my riding and also throughout the city of Ottawa and the national capital region.

Today I discuss a unique issue. The hospital sits on land that is owned by the Government of Canada, the National Capital Commission. It has paid nearly a million dollars in rent since its formation in the early seventies.

The current lease arrangement that exists between the hospital and the government will expire in roughly eight years, at which point the Liberal government is threatening to raise the rent by several

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millions of dollars to equal full market value. This would have the pernicious impact of costing the hospital, in the words of its outgoing chairman, as many as 40 nurses. It could also block plans for the hospital to build a cancer care centre and to provide family doctors right on site in a community that is sorely lacking of those resources.

My motion calls on the government to do what most municipalities and provincial governments already have done for their local hospitals, which is to turn over the land to that hospital for the price of \$1. This is standard treatment for most municipalities and provinces. In fact, there are at least two hospitals in the city of Ottawa alone that received their land from the city of Ottawa for the price of \$1.

It merely follows in a logical order that the Government of Canada would do the same thing for this local hospital.

This issue was brought to my attention by great community leaders like D. Aubrey Moodie, who was one of the hospital's founders. He indicated that this was a problem, but so did the chair of the hospital and its CEO and members of its board. All of them had attempted in the past to bring this matter to the attention of the government, but with no success. In fact, people attempted to bring this matter to the attention of the member for Ottawa West—Nepean. Her inaction on the matter had caused them to turn elsewhere to find some resolve.

I would like to begin by thanking some members of the House who have supported our hospital thus far, members of the Conservative caucus. We also have had support from members of the New Democratic caucus. I make particular mention of the member from Winnipeg who has showed excellent resolve and the Bloc member for Repentigny who also has supported the local hospital.

Neither of these members have direct interest in this hospital, as their geography puts them at quite a distance. Because of their altruistic desire to see health care provided across the country in a manner that is fair, equitable and complete, they have come to support of this hospital.

So far though, I say with great regret, we have not seen any support from any member of the Liberal caucus. Not one member of the Liberal caucus has taken any action whatsoever to bring about positive resolve for our community hospital.

In advance of their rising, I will address some of the bureaucratic obfuscation that we can expect from the Liberals in tonight's debate. I will go through argument by argument and dismantle piece by piece all the bureaucratic obstacles which will be presented by the Liberal caucus in this evening's debate and beyond.

First, they will argue that, if the hospital gets its land for \$1, then the government's entire real estate portfolio will come tumbling down, that tenants of all sorts across the country will suddenly demand that they too should have land for \$1 and that the assets of the Government of Canada will therefore be cannibalized.

I reassure them in advance that the sky will not fall if this hospital gets its land.

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● (1735)

Let me provide the reasons why. First, municipalities do this all the time. Second, the Government of Canada has done it before. For example, the National Capital Commission owns the land on which the Pineview Golf Course is located. It charges that golf course \$1 per year in rent.

The government will argue that the golf course made a down payment of \$200,000 some years ago. That is true. This hospital has made a down payment of nearly \$1 million because it has been paying year after year. The hospital has paid five times as much in down payment and now merely asks for the same treatment the Liberal government has given a golf course. Members opposite, even those who represent the region, oppose the hospital and come to the defence of the Liberal leader who is responsible for this problem.

Third, other hospitals in the country sit on federal land. Veterans hospitals and aboriginal hospitals sit on federal government land and the government charges them zero rent. In fact, only one hospital in the whole country pays rent to the federal government and it is the Queensway Carleton Hospital. It is the exception to the rule. It is my view that exception should continue no longer.

The next argument Liberal members will make is that the hospital's lease expires in 2013. We have plenty of time, "Don't worry, be happy". Hospitals have long term planning cycles that go 10, 15 and even 20 years out. They hire demographers to plan what population will be in the region 10 or 15 years from now so they can make budgetary decisions and capital investments today that will support the long term care of the community.

This hospital needs to plan whether it can build a cancer centre, dental offices and family doctor centres on campus, as the board is actively considering. Those decisions, if they are to be taken forward 10 years from now, must be made today. The financial decisions and overall planning of the hospital campus must happen now. Those decisions cannot occur with this multi-million dollar cloud hanging over the hospital's head. It is impossible for any institution to make decisions of that enormity if it may have to face a multi-million dollar rent increase within the current hospital planning cycle. In other words, it needs to know immediately what its situation will be at the termination of this lease.

Finally, the hospital plans in the imminent future the possibility of constructing a building on-site which could be rented to family doctors, dentists and other health care practitioners which would generate revenue for the hospital and bring more specialists to our community. That cannot occur unless the hospital has control of its own land and an assurance that all the rental revenues that would come from those buildings would go to the hospital and not to the Liberal government. Again, this issue needs urgent resolution.

Another argument Liberals will make is that Treasury Board rules prohibit them from giving the hospital control over its own land. They will point to clauses in the Treasury Board guidelines which indicate that full market value rent must be exacted from the tenant in order to live up to the rules of the Treasury Board. They managed to do it for a golf course, but let us go even further.

The Treasury Board is a cabinet committee, meaning that the Liberal cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, and he should be

responding to this issue today, has the full authority to overturn or create some sort of dispensation for this hospital at any time it pleases. In fact, it makes all the rules and the cabinet is the master of its own destiny. That means this decision is entirely within the hands of the Liberal leader and his Liberal cabinet.

● (1740)

The Liberals cannot simply blame the NCC and claim that the decision is out of their hands. They are the ones who are responsible for the punishing rent that awaits our hospital. They, at the next cabinet meeting, should they have the political will, have the authority to decide there and then next Tuesday morning to give the hospital its land.

Why will the Liberal Prime Minister not make that decision? He is dithering again. What is funny is that the Liberals did not have to dither that long when it was their friends who needed money. When they were handing out money in the sponsorship program there was not some complicated process of rules that had to be followed. They simply handed the money over to their friends.

To this day, through the Technology Partnerships Canada program, Liberal lobbyists are making money hand over fist and breaking all the rules. It just seems that the Liberals are fully prepared to bend and break any rule they want when it puts money in the pockets of their friends but when it comes to a hospital, oh, there are rules. We cannot have the rules broken because a hospital perhaps will not profit the Liberal Party of Canada.

I would argue that it is far more important that we provide this hospital with its land and its financial security than it is for that party to continue to pillage the public trust and waste Canadian tax dollars. However once again we will see Liberals rise in the House and they will list 15-year-old reports and bureaucratic rules dating back before I was born, collecting so much dust because they have not been pulled off the shelves for decades and decades, but they contain some small clause that would stop the Liberals, they claim, from giving the hospital its land.

That kind of bureaucratic obfuscation will not convince anyone. It will not convince this party, which actually supports health care and fights for its citizens, and it will not convince the people of west end Ottawa who desperately need the services of this hospital.

Today we stand before the House with an historic opportunity to defend the interests of an entire community of 400,000 who rely on a hospital. There is no reason why every member of every party in the House cannot unite hand in hand with the goal of this hospital's future prosperity in mind.

After having heard some of these facts I have shared this evening, I am sure that members of the Liberal Party will have changed their view and that when they rise today they will have agreed that this hospital is worth more than the rental cheque that the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister want to collect from it.

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I want to close with a message of empowerment to inspire the government to change its ways. I will close with a very brief story if I have the time.

There once was a young boy who had a sage teacher, up to whom he looked all the time. He came to the teacher all the time and asked him questions for which that teacher always had an answer. He tried to stump him with question after question and he never could. The wise old sage always had a response.

The boy went to the sage old man with a butterfly in his hand and said, "Teacher, is this butterfly alive or is it dead?" The older gentleman thought for a moment, "How do I answer this, because if I said it was alive, the boy would squeeze it and suffocate it and if I said it was dead, he would open his hands and up to the sky it would flutter", so there was no right answer. The boy asked once again, getting more cocky and happy, he said, "Is it alive or is it dead?" The wise old man said, "Young man, the answer is in your hands".

The answer is in the hands of the Liberals. I call on them to do the right thing, to rise in favour of health care, to defend the interests of the Queensway Carleton Hospital and the thousands of patients that it serves. Let us rise together for this noble cause.

• (1745)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I believe it is unparliamentary for a member of Parliament to denigrate another member of Parliament with regard to his or her work or performance. I am sorry that the member from Nepean was named by the member and in fact is on his website again attacking another member of Parliament with his own judgment as to the quality of her work. I believe it is unparliamentary. As well, as we know the Speaker has already reprimanded that member for similar activity.

The member has not presented all the facts with regard to a number of the things that he said. I will give a couple of examples.

First, he indicated that no other Ottawa hospital is paying any rent because the city, the province and so on have given up all their debt and yet the Ottawa Hospital does pay \$200,000 in rent for its land and the hospital, which goes to the city, also pays a per bed charge to the city. Therefore the member was incorrect in his information.

He also made light of the situation that there is a golf course on national capital lands and that it only paid a \$200,000 deposit. If he had given all of the facts he would understand that it has ongoing obligations to maintain that property up to certain standards which would normally be the cost to the government. The member has, in those two instances and in many other cases, not given the full information.

I would like to ask the member a question which I posed at the government ops committee when he first brought this forward. If he is aware perhaps he could give the answer now.

The concern was raised that since the hospitals are funded in terms of their operations by the Province of Ontario, by provincial governments, that rent is included in that. To the extent that the Government of Canada or through the National Capital Commission would either charge no rent or effectively eliminate its current rental charges, the province would then offset and therefore effectively all that would be happening is that the federal government would be

paying bills that were the responsibility of the provincial government, which would seem to be inappropriate and in fact would not help the hospital because on a net basis it would be in the same place.

If the member is aware of the answer to that, he knows the question from the government ops committee, could he confirm whether he has checked to see if the hospital would be insulated from an offset from the Province of Ontario?

• (1750)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member raises three points and I will respond to them one by one.

First, he raised the case of the Ottawa Hospital. Of course I made the point that no hospital was being charged rent by the federal government. I did not comment on the municipalities arrangement. Furthermore, the Ottawa Hospital has a very unique relationship with the City of Ottawa in that it has enhanced parking space for which those charges are made. It is not of the same kind of situation that exists for the Queensway Carleton Hospital.

As for the golf course, he said that it was different because the golf course has to maintain itself, which is what it is doing in exchange for its rental obligation. I suppose it would be cutting its grass regardless of its rent situation but the hospital has to maintain itself as well. It has to keep its beds clean and it has to take 160 patients into the emergency ward every single day. I would suggest the hospital is doing more maintenance work than the entire 18 holes of the Pineview Golf Course combined.

Finally, I do not suspect that the provincial government would offset any savings that the hospital received from the federal government unless, that is, the provincial Liberal government in the province of Ontario decided to punish the hospital. However so far provincial Liberals in this province have come to support my resolution.

In fact, the provincial member of Parliament in the riding of Ottawa West—Nepean has said publicly that he supports my initiative. I would not expect any problems from the provincial McGuinty government because it is only the federal Liberal Party that stands against the hospital here. It is one party with one objective to squeeze more dollars out of Canadian taxpayers and, in this case, a hospital.

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to the motion. It obviously is a matter of great concern to the Queensway Carleton Hospital in my riding and to the many people throughout the western part of our region whom it serves. In the interests of the hospital, all of us want to see a resolution to this issue that is fair, reasonable and acceptable to the hospital.

Private Members' Business

However I find it a bit ironic that the MP for Nepean—Carleton has teamed up with the provincial member for Nepean—Carleton. I also find it a bit ironic that John Baird is now purporting to be a defender of health care. This is the same John Baird who sat at the Mike Harris cabinet table as the senior minister for eastern Ontario while hospitals were being closed, while our local hospital board was being disbanded, while nurses were being fired by the hundreds if not thousands and while the federal government transferred one billion—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Order, please. Let us listen to the hon. member, please.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I listened respectfully to my colleague across the way and I trust that I would have the same courtesy from other members of Parliament.

As I said, while nurses were being fired, when the federal government transferred \$1 billion to the Mike Harris Ontario government for new medical equipment, not one new MRI came to our region. At the same time we transferred \$250 million to the Mike Harris government for primary health care. The Nepean Community Resource Centre, which services that area and is represented by Mr. Baird, did not get one single cent for its long term plan for delivering health care in Nepean.

The member of Parliament for Nepean—Carleton keeps promoting information he knows to be false, and I find that unacceptable. As I plan to leave public office after nearly 30 years of service, it saddens me to see two politicians taking advantage and using our hospital to further their own political ambitions.

The hospital finds itself in this situation because it does have a 40 year lease with the federal government, the National Capital Commission specifically, that ends in 2013. For long term planning purposes it does need to know what its situation and what its costs will be at that time. It does want to negotiate the terms of the lease now following the end of the current lease.

The situation arises because of a policy that generally has served the public interest well. Treasury Board policy to charge fair market value for the lease or sale of any land owned by the federal government was brought in by the previous Conservative government. It was brought forward in response to the Neilson task force report, and I am sure many of us remember Eric Neilson. It stated that “Real property has been one of the most highly politicized functions of government”. That is precisely why the policy was brought in by the Conservative government at the time.

The member for Nepean—Carleton has spoken more often to the media than he has spoken to the National Capital Commission about a resolution of this issue. In fact, he cancelled two meetings with the NCC to put forward the interests of the hospital. I on the other hand have met numerous times with the hospital, with its chair, with the chair of the National Capital Commission and with them together, and initiated the very first meeting at which they began to discuss the changes in their lease. I am very happy to note that those negotiations resumed as of yesterday at my urging and apparently the discussions went well. They are not completed.

We all want to see something that is fair and reasonable for the hospital. The chair of the National Capital Commission gave that assurance some time ago directly in a letter to the member of Parliament for Nepean—Carleton. He said, “However, we welcome the opportunity to discuss the future of the lease with the hospital board and would like to emphasize that the NCC intends to act reasonably in all matters pertaining to the lease with the hospital”. That same letter to the MP for Nepean—Carleton said, “First, let me assure you that any suggestions the terms of the lease renewal would result in the rent increasing to well over \$3 million in one year is entirely unfounded”. Yet, that figure continues to be repeated.

I have urged the NCC to consider that the hospital pays for maintenance of federal property, that the federal government is not paying grants in lieu of taxes on the property because it is leased to the hospital, that this is land that is part of the greenbelt, and therefore not available for sale or for development. The hospital is not going anywhere, so that part of the property is not available for sale or development. It certainly diminishes and minimizes the property value of the lease that we are talking about.

Whatever the NCC proposes we must ensure that Auditor General Sheila Fraser is satisfied. In the past she has warned the government of the need for transparency for Parliament and the public, and the recognition of the value of real property when selling or leasing to avoid indirect subsidization. We need to ensure that Auditor General Sheila Fraser is happy with any proposed solution.

• (1755)

I want to talk specifically about one aspect of the motion. The motion proposes the transfer of the property for \$1, not the lease of the property. My colleague mentioned several commercial uses that the hospital might wish to put on the land. I am surprised, frankly, to find a Conservative member of Parliament proposing that a public institution on free land should be in competition with the private sector in the immediate area that could easily provide things like nursing homes or doctors' and medical facilities for profit.

In any case, I think he would agree that if the property were to be used for commercial purposes then it should be leased at commercial rates in order not to be subsidizing and competing unfairly with the private sector. Frankly, I would like to hear him defend that.

Finally, if there are going to be commercial uses on the property contrary to the current lease, this is something that would have to be subject to consultation with the neighbours. The member for Nepean—Carleton does not have to be concerned about that because he does not represent surrounding neighbourhoods as I do. Clearly, if we are changing the conditions that were agreed to when the hospital was built, I think the community has to be made aware of that and has to have an opportunity to respond and provide its comments.

We want to democratize the way government works. We want to democratize the way Parliament works. Excluding the public from a major change in public policy is not the way to do that.

Private Members' Business

I have put a great deal of effort into this. I want to do whatever is possible to get the hospital an agreement that it finds acceptable. I will continue to put my full efforts into that. I would urge only that others in the House do exactly the same thing, that we work toward a solution that the hospital finds acceptable, and that is consistent as well with the public interest. I hope we can all work constructively together toward that end.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to examine the facts with regard to this motion. The Queensway Carleton Hospital pays approximately \$23,000 annually to lease 50 acres of land. This lease was based on fair market value at the time. The land was leased for 40 years, or until 2013. The lease was granted in compliance with the relevant Treasury Board directives.

The hospital authorities and the member for Nepean—Carleton fear an astronomical increase in costs and, in communicating that fear to us, the member is being somewhat alarmist. The government and the NCC are refusing to transfer the land in order, among other things, to maintain the national interest land mass.

Motion No. 135 seeks to have the federal government transfer the land to the hospital for the sum of \$1.

There is a world of difference between symbolically transferring a lease or land in exchange for \$1 per year and trying to reach a reasonable agreement between the hospital's board and the NCC. In fact, on one hand, the hospital must ensure its survival. It is understandable that the directors are concerned. On the other hand, the federal government's real property program also deserves respect.

When Tom Schonberg appeared before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, I regretfully was not present. That was when my father was dying. What he said was: "We need some security going into the future, first, so that we do not have hanging over our head a large lease cost that will not bring services to Ottawa, in particular the west of Ottawa, and second, so that there's some certainty, as I said, in moving forward with any partner that a substantial amount of money does not go into the leasing of land. That's what our issue has been to this point in time."

I take from this that the CEO assumes that the lease will be terribly expensive and that this is a cause of concern to him. He also would like to have greater certainty.

I would add in passing that Mr. Schonberg's concerns, like those I suspect of all health facility administrators, are of course legitimate ones, given the federal government under-funding to which they are victims. One way to remedy this, one solution, is to require health funding to be improved while respecting the jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec, rather than as an exception. This could prove an extremely fair way of distributing wealth.

After that aside, I will quote the chair of the NCC at that same meeting. He said "I am happy to say that I have already indicated to the hospital officials that we would work with them to look at a variety of options for the future lease. I met with senior hospital officials in January 2005. At that time, we discussed a number of alternatives for setting the future rent that would respect federal

government policies, while offering the hospital a level of certainty to enable future expansion."

The Bloc Québécois is of the opinion that the two parties must, first, continue to negotiate in order to reach agreement on renewal of the lease. There is every reason to believe that they will reach an acceptable, good-faith agreement by 2013. The cost of the lease will be reasonable and set according to Treasury Board standards.

Second, both parties must agree on an amount that reflects fair market value of the land at the time of the agreement, and not base it on past decisions on other NCC properties, which do not reflect today's reality.

The Bloc Québécois position is quite consistent considering the arguments by hospital directors, the Treasury Board and the NCC. It is also consistent considering the case of the Wakefield hospital in Quebec, located in part on NCC property. Since this property was not part of the National Interest Land Mass, the National Capital Commission sold it to the hospital.

• (1805)

The property in question is 3.5 acres of land that was sold for \$5,000 an acre.

In 1994, the National Capital Commission sold land to the Perley hospital for \$9 a square foot, because the hospital needed it in order to continue operating. This land, too, was not part of the so-called National Interest Land Mass.

These are two examples that show that the National Capital Commission has signed valid contracts without suffering a shortfall.

It is very important to note that the Bloc Québécois position is in line with our calls for returning expropriated land at Mirabel. The Bloc Québécois is not asking Aéroports de Montréal to give expropriated land back or to give it up for more or less \$1, but to sell it.

In closing, it is very important that this situation is resolved without causing any financial repercussions to the federal government or for this to look like an indirect subsidy. Just like the hon. member who spoke before me, I want to add that the auditor general herself has already raised the issue of the need for transparency in the past and the need for the value of real estate to be known and taken into account.

It is not desirable to create a shortfall for the NCC, nor a precedent in this case.

As I was saying in the beginning, the two parties are now in negotiations. We have no reason to doubt that they are acting in good faith. They have until 2013 to agree, so let us leave them to it.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me also begin by complimenting the member for Nepean—Carleton. I honestly believe that this is an example of a member of Parliament doing exactly what a member of Parliament should be doing and that is to advocate aggressively on behalf of his riding and the people in his riding on an issue that I see as having broad public policy interests.

We are talking about the National Capital Commission charging rent at market value to a hospital within my colleague's riding of Nepean—Carleton. I put it to hon. members that this is simply bad public policy. I think we should support my colleague's motion as a matter of course, and as a precedent-setting matter of course this rent should be reduced to one dollar, a token amount of money.

I cannot tell the House how strongly I feel about this. I know that there are other hospitals across the country on federal land. The federal government does not charge them rent or lease amounts because it is an absurd idea to have this snake eating its tail in a circular route of public money.

The federal government gives public money to the provinces to administer health care. The province gives money to a hospital to run the hospital. Why should the hospital then be charged market value rent just to send it back to, in this case, the federal government via the National Capital Commission? It does not make any sense and it certainly puts the hospital at a disadvantage.

With all due respect to my colleague from the Bloc who was making the point that there is plenty of time for the two parties to negotiate a reasonable settlement, I ask her to consider the testimony we heard at committee from one of the principals, a member of the board of directors. It may even have been the CEO of the board of directors who pointed out that in order to plan future development they need certainty about what their capital costs will be and what their fixed costs will be. The cost of their lease as contemplated by the NCC could be as high as \$3.4 million per year. Some media outlets have put it at about half that amount. Either way, it could equal the salaries of 40 nurses.

In order to plan a proposed new cancer care centre for that hospital, a much needed and much anticipated new capital investment, the directors also need to know what their costs will be, because it takes five, seven and eight years to get a new cancer care treatment centre online and up and running. They need to know with some certainty today what their fixed costs will be eight years from now or that cancer care program and building will not be built. There is some sense of urgency, even though the lease does not expire for a couple of years.

I hope members of Parliament here can see fit to at least listen to the words of Mr. Jeff Polowin, the chair of the board of directors of the Queensway Carleton Hospital. I would ask hon. members to listen to a brief part of his presentation to us. He said to our committee, "Mr. Chair, we are the only hospital in the Ottawa area that pays rent. We pay rent to the National Capital Commission...Let me stress, please, that this is not the NCC's fault".

In fact, said Mr. Polowin, the NCC and its staff "have been extremely cooperative in searching for a compromise...but Mr.

Beaudry and the NCC's hands are tied". He goes on to say that this is purely "a political decision here in Ottawa" and that perhaps the committee "can untie his hands".

In other words, there is some interest on the part of the National Capital Commission in accommodating the reasonable position of the hospital and the member of Parliament representing that hospital, but the NCC's hands are tied by a directive from government, from cabinet, from Treasury Board. The NCC's hands could be untied with a directive from the House of Commons to tell the cabinet and the Liberal government not to adhere to this Treasury Board guideline, in the case of hospitals alone, because it is counter-productive, it is bad public policy, it is bad for our health care system and there is no justification.

● (1810)

I think my colleague, the member for Nepean—Carleton, was trying to point out that we are being constrained by a policy decision made arbitrarily with no business case for it. As if there were not enough compelling reasons for the government to simply change this policy, there is this glaring contradiction of a golf course within the geographic region of the NCC being given a \$1 a year lease. It is absurd to be charging a hospital which, arguably, is of greater public benefit even for those who may love golf. Surely we can accept that it is more important that the hospital be adequately funded and not be crippled and constrained by high rent costs than it is to grant this \$1 deal to a golf course.

Surely we can see the sense as parliamentarians of our beleaguered health care system not being saddled with this onerous rent. The \$23,000 that the hospital has been paying for over 30 years is a significant chunk of change in its own right, but to assess the rent at the market value, given what just happened to real estate prices in the last 12 months, puts an uncertainty on the board of directors of the hospital that they would have a really hard time coping with.

Therefore, in the interest of common sense, if we can appeal to nothing else but common sense, I urge members of Parliament to consider this motion and to consider entertaining the idea that in the case of hospitals, without precedent or prejudice for any other type of federal government building that may be on public land, we should in fact adopt the motion as put forward in the debate today.

Just for added weight, I should say that I have the full support of my caucus on this and, in particular, the member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre who feels very strongly about this idea but who could not be here tonight so I am representing the caucus on this issue, and other members of Parliament in the Ottawa region who are in full agreement with the motion. The only caveat or condition that the member for Ottawa Centre asked me to convey to members tonight is that he wishes this policy could be expanded so that it would apply to any hospital on any federal land anywhere in the country.

Private Members' Business

This is a good idea brought forward by a good member of Parliament who is doing what an MP should be doing and that is advocating aggressively on behalf of his constituents and on behalf of this critically important hospital. Anyone who may have the time or interest should look through the presentations made at our standing committee when we dealt with this motion. I also should point out that the motion passed at the committee. We are only asking the House of Commons to further ratify and endorse what the committee, in its wisdom, decided.

There is great wisdom in this idea. National benefits can be gained from this idea as a precedent pertaining to hospitals only, I should add. I feel very strongly that this is a good thing to do for all of these reasons.

I will close by quoting a legal opinion from the law firm of Lang Michener stating:

It is clear that the Canadian Health care system has come increasingly under financial pressures. The federal government continues to cut federal spending on provincial health care, yet, continues to demand adherence to the principles of the *Canada Health Act*. By forcing the QCH to pay rent for a service which is constitutionally mandated to be a "national concern" within federal jurisdiction is requiring the QCH to violate the legislative authority to which they are bound.

This lawyer sees the contradiction inherent in this practice of trying to make the Queensway Carleton Hospital pay rent at market value to the National Capital Commission.

My strong feeling is that the House of Commons should give direction to cabinet to give direction to the National Capital Commission to renegotiate a long term lease on behalf of the Queensway Carleton Hospital at \$1 per year regardless of the market value of the land that it sits on.

•(1815)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be divided into three matters. First, I want to talk a little about the importance of this particular hospital, as someone who has lived most of his life in an area that is served by the Queensway Carleton Hospital. Second, I would like to talk a little about the theme of equality of treatment for institutions on federal lands and how the Queensway-Carleton Hospital is being singled out for unfair and certainly very different treatment from other institutions on federal lands. Third, I would like to correct a couple of factual errors made earlier in the remarks by my hon. colleague from Ottawa West.

At the end of my debate I will be moving an amendment to the motion. The amendment has the approval of the mover of the motion, the hon. member for Nepean—Carleton.

Let us start with number one. This is a very important hospital. My former riding of Lanark—Carleton contained a number of very small towns. Carleton Place, where I live, with a population of 10,000, has a hospital, and a very good hospital I might add. Almonte, a smaller town, also has a hospital. Smiths Falls and Perth now have a united hospital with two campuses, one in each town. This is part of the reason for the vitality of smaller towns, having the capacity to serve people in the community.

The other part of the constituency I formerly represented was the city of Kanata, now part of the city of Ottawa, with a population 65,000 and it did not have its own hospital. It was only part of the

catchment area covered by the Queensway Carleton Hospital, along with Stittsville, the Goulburn area, parts of the western part of the city of Ottawa and much of the former city of Nepean, a catchment area in total of several hundred thousand people. This is a very important institution. Perhaps I am biased a little in emphasizing how important it is by the fact that this is the hospital to which my mother was taken when she broke her hip a couple of decades ago and she received excellent service there.

Of course excellent service can be provided only when there is the financial capacity to provide that service. When moneys are diverted from health care to other expenditures, including rent to the National Capital Commission, then of course the ability to provide that money for health care services will not be there.

That is not necessarily a tremendously significant issue right now because the amount of rent being paid is not huge. Just now the Queensway Carleton Hospital is finishing up a 40-year lease that was signed in July 1973. The lease will expire in 2013. Right now the rent is not enormous, but in 2013 it could become a very substantial rent. Because of the uncertainty caused by no decision being taken to guarantee a reasonable rate of rent, a guarantee into the future, the Queensway Carleton Hospital is hamstrung. It is hamstrung now by the dithering of a government that will not deal with an issue which, sure, is eight years off in the future. In terms of this government, that might as well be a million years from now. In terms of investment and the sorts of investments that a hospital has to make, that is not a million years from now. Eight years is in fact a very short time horizon and the hospital cannot act unless it has certainty.

The second thing I want to talk about is equality treatment. Justice demands that all like facilities on federal lands be treated similarly. There are other hospitals on federal lands. This is not the only one. This is, however, the only one that faces this kind of uncertainty. This is the only hospital on federal lands that pays more than a nominal rent and which faces the danger of a potentially enormous increase in its rental payment in the future. This makes this hospital's situation very different from that of the other hospitals that are on federal lands.

Of course the example was already given of the Pine View Municipal Golf Course, a golf course in the city of Ottawa which pays a nominal rent to the National Capital Commission. An observation was made about the fact that it has certain obligations in addition to its nominal rent.

I am unaware of any lease signed by anyone anywhere—and I say this as someone who has a lease on a number of properties myself, including constituency offices. I have two constituency offices. I rent where I live. I have signed business leases. I have never heard of a lease that does not have obligations in it.

•(1820)

The nonsense that was thrown out by the hon. member that somehow this distinguishes and explains why there is no actual monetary revenue paid by this golf course is just nonsense. This is just a red herring thrown across the path to leave the impression that somehow the government is not engaged in a gross injustice when it imposes costs on a hospital that it will not impose on a golf course. And I say that as someone who loves golf.

Adjournment Proceedings

This brings me to the third theme I have in my remarks today, the misstatements or the errors that were made in the remarks by the hon. member for Ottawa West—Nepean. I mentioned the golf course already which was one of them. The second one was about private facilities on hospital premises. She suggested, erroneously, and it was probably an honest mistake but I want to correct it now, that the hon. member for Nepean—Carleton in his motion had also talked about the idea of putting private facilities, for profit facilities, on the land currently leased by the hospital from the National Capital Commission. That is not so. What in fact the hon. member for Nepean—Carleton has said is that the hospital might be allowed in the future to sublease facilities to private practitioners, that is, to family practitioners in particular, in order that they can carry on their family practices.

There is the problem of a lack of family practitioners in Ontario. I for one do not have a family doctor right now. The member is trying to assist in dealing with this problem in his constituency. This is something that hospitals are doing everywhere, including in the province of Ontario. To suddenly discover that this is some kind of abuse of the health care system is an invention of the member for Ottawa West—Nepean. There is in fact a perfectly reasonable business case for doing this. There is a health care case for doing this. I think this is just another red herring the member has thrown out to distract us from the real issue of the injustice in the way in which the Queensway-Carleton Hospital is being treated.

Third is the issue of what the NCC can and cannot do, that somehow the NCC is an independent operator, operating out there with no political interference, that it is on its own and any problems that arise in the way the Queensway-Carleton is treated should be laid, the member suggests, at the door of the National Capital Commission. That is just not so. The National Capital Commission is under the control of the cabinet and of the government. The National Capital Commission can and does change things, or indeed is overridden by orders in council when the government decides to do so.

The government did decide to do so in a matter that it judged to be of urgency just a few months ago when it was discovered that a member of the Senate might be in a position of conflict of interest. The Treasury Board rules were changed regarding a building in the national capital area. When it is an issue the government judges to be of importance, it can act lickety-split and it should act quickly on this issue too, an issue that is of importance.

I mentioned that I had an amendment to present. In presenting this amendment, I just want to say that the member also suggested that the transfer of land, the transfer of ownership of the land is a major issue, that we ought not to alienate federal property and that it might some day go on to some other use. Of course some things could be written into the covenant of sale to deal with that. The other possibility is that the land could be leased at a nominal rate for a long period of time. That is what my amendment is going to suggest, that the federal government lease the land to the hospital for a long period of time at \$1 a year.

We can test the sincerity of the member's commitment to actually try to provide these services and test whether or not it was just a non sequitur that she threw out when this amendment comes up for a vote.

Therefore, I move, with the approval of the original mover of the motion, the hon. member for Nepean—Carleton:

That M-135 be amended by:

(a) deleting the word "transferring" and replacing it with the words "continuing to lease"; and

(b) by adding after the word "dollar", the following: "per annum, starting at the end of the current lease in the year 2013".

● (1825)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There always are these questions of whether there is a substantive change in the original intent of the motion.

The motion as presented to the House was very clearly that there be a sale of property for \$1 and that the ownership is going to transfer from the National Capital Commission to the hospital.

The amendment being proposed is a totally different arrangement, where the ownership is not going to change. That is different. The whole concept of leasing or continuing to own and to lease is much different from actually selling.

I believe that the amendment is out of order, simply because it is a substantive change from what was presented to members and on which we have debated.

● (1830)

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the rules of the House in front of me, but I believe that in order for an amendment to be out of order, it would have to change the intention of the motion. The intention, as was made very clear in the lengthy speech of my hon. colleague, was to ensure that the Queensway Carleton Hospital is able to continue functioning.

I am aware that the hon. member disagrees with me on this point. However, I think the key point here is not the sale or lease, but it is in fact the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Order. Seeing that we are at the end of this hour, I will take the proposals under advisement. We will come back to the House prior to the next hour of debate on this particular subject.

[*Translation*]

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on a follow up question that I raised originally on June 20 after the Department of Agriculture announced it was closing the Nappan Experimental Farm in my riding, along with three other farms across the country.

I raised the issue at the time after I made an access to information request to find out the reasoning behind it and what was going on. In response to that access to information request, a report said that the field site at Nappan would not be needed for research any more and would be divested by 2006. The beef research from Nappan would then move to New Liskeard, Ontario.

In the same access to information report it stated, "Nappan is one of the four original experimental farms in Canada created by legislation in the 1880s. Research here could be shifted to Lacombe, Alberta". It goes on to say, "The office of the local MP has now become involved", and that is me. I am involved and very concerned about this. The report I received indicated that other farms, including Kentville, Bouctouche and many others across the country, would close.

We raised this with the minister and, to his credit, he called a moratorium on all closures. He has begun a process of hearings to try to determine a better strategy for science in the country. We appreciate the moratorium and the opportunity to present our case.

Nappan is an 800 acre farm with total unique soils, grasses and forages that are unique to Atlantic Canada. Research in Atlantic Canada cannot be done in Lacombe, Alberta. It cannot be duplicated simply because of the different soils and circumstances. There are hundreds of acres of chemical free property at the Nappan Experimental Farm, perfect for organic research and research on crops and products that could be produced for Atlantic Canada.

There is a unique building that does testing on individual cattle. It tests cattle for the amount of feed they eat each day, they are controlled, one by one, and it is very impressive. It is my understanding that it is the only one in any experimental farm in Canada and it cannot be duplicated anywhere else.

Through access to information, we received a document on specific activities and time lines for agriculture research and science in Canada. At the time, I tried to find out who wrote this brief, who it was addressed to and the date it was written. We have had several comments that it is a memo. It outlines specific things that will happen in agricultural science across the country, including closing several experimental facilities. It specifically says that the first four will be Nappan and the three others I mentioned earlier.

We have asked for this through access to information and officials at the Department of Agriculture. Originally, the minister agreed to ensure that I received this information, but we still have not obtained the information on specific activities and time lines. I called the minister's office today to give him a heads up that I would be asking about the report. We would still like to know who wrote the report, who it was to and the date it was written.

I see the very distinguished Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture is present. I am sure he will give a very eloquent answer on this. I believe the agricultural community in Nova Scotia, the Department of Agriculture and the minister are working toward a solution that will allow the Nappan Experimental Farm to survive, prosper and serve the agricultural community in the way it should for many years to come.

If the parliamentary secretary has that information, could he tell us who wrote it, who it was to and the date it was written?

• (1835)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will provide information later on where we believe we should go with our research. The member opposite continues to refer to documents that relate to opinions, analysis and possible scenarios that were developed to explore possible directions for the department's science activities, but they do not represent the final decisions made by the department.

In his remarks the member opposite congratulated the minister for putting in place a moratorium on the four research stations mentioned, and that is to the member's credit.

The facts are these. In February the department, as part of the expenditure review initiative, announced that it would be closing four research locations in Nappan, Nova Scotia, St. John's, Newfoundland, Kapuskasing, Ontario and Winnipeg, Manitoba. However, the minister decided, after feedback from many across the country, including the member opposite, to put in place a moratorium. That moratorium has been put on those closures and those locations will continue to operate until all consultations about their future are completed and evaluated.

The government is committed to ensuring that Canada is a world leader in agriculture. To achieve that goal we must be a world leader in science and innovation. On September 22 the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food announced a series of cross-country consultations and a national symposium as the next phase in the development of our science strategy. We will be working with communities, stakeholders, industry, universities and provincial representatives to determine research priorities for agriculture and we will be endeavouring to ensure that public funds are spent wisely in doing so.

Adjournment Proceedings

During the cross-country consultations that I held on the farm income problems, it was made very clear to me at every location that research at the primary production level was extremely important. There is a view among producers that research has shifted away from primary agriculture to the industry value-added side and they want that dealt with.

In part these consultations are all about that. They are to hear the industry so the government can develop a policy and that moratorium will remain in place until such time as those discussions are over and the federal government can announce its science research and science policy for the Department of Agriculture.

• (1840)

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged that the parliamentary secretary came to the Nappan Experimental Farm, like the minister did last week. It was very valuable to all of us for him to make that trip. I appreciate the fact that he did that. I also appreciate the parliamentary secretary's opinion a minute ago when he said that they recognized the value of research.

When the minister was in Nappan last week, he said that he recognized agricultural research much be regional. I know the parliamentary secretary has a lot of experience with P.E.I. potatoes and I am sure he would agree that research on P.E.I. potatoes could not be done in Lacombe, Alberta.

Would he agree now that beef research for Atlantic Canada cannot be done in either Lacombe or somewhere in Ontario? It must be done in Atlantic Canada to reflect our Atlantic Canada circumstances for

soils, grasses, forages and feed prospects. Would the parliamentary secretary agree that beef research for the Atlantic region must be done in Atlantic Canada?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I prefer to lay out the five principles that the minister has laid out for the consultations. First, the department's national investment in science will be maintained at its current level or better. Second, research and development activities will be generally maintained in all provinces at current levels. Third, science undertaken will meet the needs of industry and take into account regional variances. Fourth, departmental initiatives will be integrated with the research and development planning and delivery done by government partners, universities and industry in Canada and abroad. Fifth, departmental initiatives will work to ensure synergy between researchers and to create state of the art facilities.

By pooling our resources with other research partners, we will be able to focus and increase the actual level of research activities with similar dollars. The minister's initiative is to move forward and do a better job of doing research.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:42 p.m.)

APPENDIX

Speech

from

the Prime Minister

APPENDIX

Speech
from
the Prime Minister

[English]

Your Excellencies, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me begin by expressing, on behalf of all Canadians, our appreciation to the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson and John Ralston Saul. With warmth, intelligence, and wit, they have honoured this high office and made an indelible contribution to our nation.

Over the course of six years, Madame Clarkson recognized achievement, decorated bravery, bore witness to tragedy and grief, and encouraged the disadvantaged. She welcomed foreign visitors and eloquently explained before audiences abroad what it is that makes Canada special. She took great interest in our cities and towns, and especially the north. She traveled to more than 200 communities across Canada; in some of them, it was the first-ever visit by a representative of the Crown.

Adrienne Clarkson was a patron of the arts – a supporter of designers, artists, thinkers. Above all, she encouraged us to embrace our potential. As she has boldly stated of Canadian citizenship itself, it is “a statement of potential. It is not enough to possess it. The potential has to be fulfilled.”

Madame Clarkson, Mr. Saul: We are the grateful beneficiaries of your energy, creativity and dedication. In your faithful service you have reaffirmed and celebrated Canada’s singularity in the world. On behalf of Canadians, thank you.

Esteemed guests: we have the pleasure of welcoming to the Senate an already widely admired Canadian who today will become one of the youngest-ever residents of Rideau Hall. Marie-Éden is six and a half years old. I’m reliably informed she intends to use her newfound prominence to serve as an outspoken advocate for later bedtimes.

In making the move to Ottawa, Marie-Éden has been kind enough to bring along her parents. Her father is the respected documentary filmmaker, Jean-Daniel Lafond. Her mother is the 27th Governor-General of Canada, Michaëlle Jean.

A woman of rare perspective, sensitivity and understanding, Madame Jean is renowned for her compassion, her eagerness to listen—and for her desire to act.

Her story is remarkable. She was born in Port-au-Prince. In 1968, at the age of 11, she and her family fled Haiti as refugees. They came to Canada. They settled in Quebec.

One might be tempted to say: “... and she never looked back” – for in her adopted country, Michaëlle Jean achieved success, rose to prominence and built a family. But no matter how far she has come, no matter how much she has accomplished, she has nurtured her memory of the past. Through her work we can see that by looking back, she has found the compass to guide her into the future.

During a rich and varied working life – as a social activist, a writer and lecturer, a public broadcaster – she has often been the voice of

those who must struggle to be heard. She has been much more than an observer. She has defined herself as a woman of action, committed to social justice, to raising up those who need help most. She has turned our gaze to Haiti, the country of her birth. She has investigated the lives of the most vulnerable among us and examined the fact of her own status as an immigrant, and as a black woman in Quebec. She has spoken of a confident Canada, a country looking ahead, a country making its mark on the world.

The office of Governor-General is a link to our past, a repository of tradition, and so it should be. But it must also serve as an expression of how we see ourselves today, and of our aspirations and our hopes for the Canada we want to be.

We are a young nation, a nation built by Aboriginal peoples, by pioneers and their descendents, by immigrants – people who have come here in search of safety, in pursuit of opportunity. We are an optimistic nation, open to the global community. Look into the face of Canada, and you will see the world.

Your Excellency: your life is as profound an expression of what it means to be Canadian as any story you have reported on.

In your story, we find that what lies at the core of Canada is respect – for other cultures, for other races and religions, respect for other points of view. In your story, we understand that we have an obligation, at home and abroad, to protect human dignity – that freedom is not freedom from responsibility.

You represent Canada at its very best: a nation that is determined to assure equality of opportunity, a nation that embraces difference and is capable of growth and change.

Ladies and gentlemen, over almost four decades, Michaëlle Jean has seen Canada change. She has been part of that change. As our Governor-General, she will represent the Canada of the 21st century – she will represent us – to the people of the world.

Your Excellency, I thank you and your family for embracing your new responsibilities. It is my pleasure, on behalf of Canadians, to wish you every success in the accomplishment of your new duties.

Thank you.

APPENDIX

Speech

from

the Governor General

APPENDIX

Speech
from
the Governor General

[English]

Monsieur le Premier ministre, Prime Minister,

It is with tremendous pride and deep emotion that I am responding today to the call of destiny which sometimes takes us in a direction we might never have imagined. I am proud of the confidence you have placed in me by choosing me as the 27th Governor General of Canada. Here today, before all of you, I am turning a significant page in my own story as I set off on this new adventure with hope and determination.

Let me begin by speaking about hope. During the 22nd visit to Canada by Queen Elizabeth II last May, Her Majesty reminded us that we can “make a difference” for those who will come after us. “If we make an effort in our own lives and in our way of improving the world around us,” she said, “we will have every reason to be proud of what we have accomplished.” That observation is a perfect reflection of the woman who is deeply concerned about the fate of humanity, whom I had the honour of meeting at Balmoral. It is an expression of hope that parallels my own.

Hope has been a beacon for me since childhood and into my adult years. It is embodied in this country with its unlimited possibilities – this country that we sometimes take for granted. My own story begins as a young child in another country, one “draped in barbed wire from head to toe,” in the powerful words of the Haitian poet in exile, René Depestre, who is also my uncle. The story of that little girl, who watched her parents, her family, and her friends grappling with the horrors of a ruthless dictatorship, who became the woman standing before you today, is a lesson in learning to be free.

I know how precious that freedom is, I know what a legacy it is for every child, for every citizen of this country. I whose ancestors were slaves, who was born into a civilization long reduced to whispers and cries of pain, know something about its price, and I know too what a treasure it is for us all.

Every Canadian woman, every Canadian man prizes that freedom and would defy anyone who tried to take it away – of that I have no doubt. From Signal Hill to Vancouver Island, from Baffin Land to Thetford Mines, the freedom that is ours unites us all. Freedom has marked our history and our territory, it has marked our summer breezes and our howling winter winds. It has helped create the spirit of adventure that I love above all in this country, this country where each and every one of us is able to participate fully in the ongoing task of building it.

More than four centuries ago that spirit of adventure drove women and men to cross the ocean and discover a new world elsewhere. That spirit also led the First Nations to pass on to those new settlers the essence of this generous land. And it encourages people from all over the world to share in our prospects or to take refuge here and make a fresh start, safe from tyranny and violence. It inspires our artists, our scientists, our peacekeepers and our institutions as they

work to spread our know-how and our message of hope. Today, we are the sum of those adventures.

Think about it. To set off for terra incognita with the hope of putting down roots in a new land. To take one’s inspiration from the encounter with the first population of these wide-open spaces and their age-old customs. To open oneself to the entire world, which comes here inspired by the ideal of a society in which the rights of all citizens are equal. Our history speaks powerfully about the freedom to invent a new world, about the courage underlying those remarkable adventures.

Let me add that my appointment to the position of Governor General of Canada is proof of that. We are encouraged to believe that everything is possible in this country and my own adventure represents for me and for others a spark of hope that I want kept alive for the greatest number.

Today we are reaping what we have sown and the harvest is bountiful. We have designed measures to foster new talents who send out our voices to the world. Now, in the first years of a new millennium, Canada can rely on two priceless resources : our land and our population. Every one of us rekindles in his own way the sense of belonging to this space that we all share, a space that contains the world. Never has it been so urgent to ensure the ethical and ecological integrity of this world for the generations to come. It is a moral obligation.

I know that our planet is fragile, and that natural disasters like the one that recently assailed our American neighbours, are a brutal reminder of that fragility. And we have seen so many lose their possessions. And as is universally the case in such circumstances, we have seen emerge entire segments of a population, among the most destitute, men and women who had nowhere to go. Dispossessed, with no points of reference, facing sheer devastation, even utter dismay. Such images we have seen before – from Darfur, from Haiti, from Niger. And this time they came from New Orleans, from the margins of an affluent society.

Other changes have come, changes that sometimes leave us perplexed. Redefining national boundaries and the violent upheavals that sometimes accompany it, the opening of markets, the speed and convergence of our systems of communication, mean that the map of the world is changing day by day, before our eyes, and that some countries may be wondering about where they fit in. The stakes are high: they include taking part in increasing globalization while at the same time protecting features that enrich humanity with our own perceptions of the world.

As a journalist, the profession I practiced with passion and resolve, I have been a privileged witness both of a good many upheavals and of an unprecedented opening onto the world. I pledge that I will go on listening and that my curiosity will remain keen. We are at a turning point in the history of civilization and more than ever before, our future rests on those who are forcing us to imagine the world of tomorrow. Those women and men are today showing us the vast range of what is possible for us. They are etching upon our memories the breadth of our aspirations. They are holding out a mirror that reveals the gap between what we are and what we aspire to be.

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