



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 17, 2010

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 17, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[English]

COMMISSIONER OF LOBBYING

The Speaker: I have the honour pursuant to section 11 of the Lobbying Act to lay upon the table the report of the Commissioner of Lobbying for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2010.

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AIR INDIA

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Investigation of the Bombing of Air India Flight 182.

The government recognizes the extensive work of Justice John Major in preparing his final report and, as ever, our thoughts are with the families of the victims of this tragic event.

This incident stands as a reminder that Canadians are not immune to acts of terrorism. We can and we must remain vigilant in order to ensure that all Canadians remain safe.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the motion adopted by the committee, the Standing Committee on Status of Women studied the issue of maternal and child health at its meetings held on May 3, 5, 10, 12 and 26, and June 7, 9 and 14—

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. I believe this is a committee report and we are on tabling of documents which are not committee reports. They will come later. Is there any other tabling of documents?

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both of our country's official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on National Defence—

The Speaker: It is not yet time for presenting committee reports. It is now the period for the tabling of documents.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 23 petitions.

* * *

STRENGTHENING AVIATION SECURITY ACT

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (for the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Aeronautics Act.

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

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE MODERNIZATION ACT

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-43, An Act to enact the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Labour Relations Modernization Act and to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

* * *

• (1005)

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation to the Canada-China Legislative Association and the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation at the 14th annual Assembly of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentarians Conference on the Environment and Development, APCED, held in Koror, Palau from November 17 to November 19, 2009.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as member of Parliament for Beauce and as Chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on National Defence on its study of Arctic sovereignty. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the motion adopted by the committee, the Standing Committee on Status of Women studied the issue of maternal and child health at its meetings held on May 3, 5, 10, 12 and 26, and June 7, 9 and 14, 2010.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide the Minister of International Cooperation with the government members' assessment of this study, with some conclusions from the report adopted in committee on June 14, 2010, and tabled in the House, in both official languages, by the committee chair on June 16, 2010.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, the official report was tabled in the House yesterday, so the parliamentary secretary is trying to contravene the Standing Orders. She is trying to table a dissenting report that contains a different opinion than in the report that was tabled. Time ran out before it could be tabled yesterday. In my opinion, she cannot do indirectly today what she did not want to do directly yesterday; to include her negative report in the report tabled. I therefore object to the tabling of her dissenting report.

The Speaker: I did not hear every word that the hon. parliamentary secretary said, but if that is not the committee's report, it cannot be tabled today during the time for committee reports.

[English]

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE CANADIAN MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present today, in both official languages, the first report of the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan entitled, "Report on a Trip to Afghanistan".

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs entitled, "A Timely Tune-up for the Living New Veterans Charter".

I wish to thank all committee members for their work and dedication. I can say that this report is a collective work from all political parties to see a good and workable document produced for the well-being of our heroes, veterans, injured soldiers facing difficulties and also their families.

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first

report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development concerning the situation at Rights & Democracy entitled "Rights & Democracy: Moving Towards a Stronger Future". Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

●(1010)

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development in relation to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

HEALTH

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Health entitled, "Promoting Innovative Solutions to Health Human Resources Challenges".

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in relation to the emerging and digital media opportunities and challenges.

FINANCE

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to the retirement income security of Canadians.

I would like to thank all committee members for their work, as well as the clerk, the analysts and all the staff who helped us prepare this report.

* * *

NATIONAL HOUSING ACT

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-549, An Act to amend the National Housing Act (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's retained earnings).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce a bill that would harness CMHC's \$2 billion annual surplus to the goal of sheltering Canadians, a goal from which CMHC has strayed over the years.

This bill would amend section 21 of the National Housing Act, requiring CMHC's unappropriated retained earnings to be transferred to provinces to provide housing for low income households. It would pose no financial risk to CMHC, which maintains twice the level of capital reserves recommended by OSFI, but it would guide it in fulfilling its mandate to help Canadians in need access affordable, sound and suitable housing.

Finally, it would help all of us attain the right to housing that the Government of Canada pledged to uphold when it ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights more than three decades ago.

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

* * *

FORGIVENESS OF STUDENT LOANS FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-550, An Act respecting the forgiveness of student loans for health professionals.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce a bill that would help students and improve access to basic medical care for people across the country.

We know that regular checkups and preventative health care are far better and cheaper for Canadians than ignoring health problems until a trip to the hospital is required, but far too many families do not have access to a family doctor.

My bill would freeze student loan payments for the first five years after graduation for all doctors and nurse practitioners who agree to practise family medicine in an underserved area. After five years, their student debt would be decreased by 20% for each year they continue to serve as family doctors or nurse practitioners in underserved communities. The effect would be that after 10 years of practising family medicine, their student debt would be totally forgiven.

Last year I met with representatives of the Canadian Federation of Medical Students and they told me about the crippling debt burden faced by many medical graduates.

This bill would help these hard-working students who are dedicating their lives to serving the public and it would help get more family doctors and nurse practitioners into communities that need them.

I ask all members of the House to support this practical idea to strengthen our public health care system for all Canadians.

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

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INVESTMENT CANADA ACT

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-551, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act (committee members).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to table my bill entitled, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act. I am pleased that this bill is being seconded by my colleague from Churchill.

Routine Proceedings

Liberal and Conservative governments have consistently rubber-stamped foreign takeovers of Canadian companies without any transparency or accountability to the Canadian people. When parliamentarians seek details of these takeovers, they are told by the industry minister that they are not allowed.

This bill would change all that. It seeks to expand section 36 of the Investment Canada Act to include members of the Standing Committee on Industry. Amending section 36 in such a way would provide meaningful oversight by parliamentarians and would allow a multi-party review of foreign takeovers. This would provide greater public confidence in the process.

For too long, federal industry ministers have hidden behind section 36 of the Investment Canada Act to deny stakeholders and the public access to the terms of agreements between foreign companies and the federal government.

With this act, the Ministry of Industry would now have to co-operate with parliamentarians in the industry committee and that is a much needed improvement in the current act.

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

* * *

● (1015)

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-552, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (representation of women).

She said: Mr. Speaker, for a number of years Canadians have been demanding democratic renewal of Canada's Parliament.

With a changing cultural landscape, Canada's Parliament should be representative of the diversity that is celebrated in this country. Sadly, the reality is that today, less than 25% of the total elected members of the House of Commons are women. That is why this morning I am tabling a bill that would alter the formula of special allowances per vote received by political parties.

[Translation]

My bill would amend the Elections Act to provide a special quarterly allowance for registered parties in which a certain percentage of the members elected are women.

In addition to the existing quarterly allowances paid to political parties, which is \$1.95 per year for each valid vote cast, the bill provides for a special quarterly allowance for parties in which women represent 20% of the elected members. The 20% threshold was selected because it corresponds to an overall average in the House of Commons, where for several decades now, women have held at least 20% of the total number of seats.

The proportion of women in the House has never been higher than 30%. Although it has been as high as 25% or 30%, it has since fallen and now varies between 20% and 25%.

Routine Proceedings

This would be a special quarterly allowance of 20¢ to 40¢ per year, depending on the percentage of women elected for each political party.

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

* * *

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-553, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (special quarterly allowance).

She said: Mr. Speaker, my bill would amend the Canada Elections Act to provide a special quarterly allowance for registered parties in which a certain percentage of the members elected are aboriginal people, members of visible minorities and persons with disabilities.

In addition to the quarterly allowance given to political parties, which is currently set at \$1.95 a year per valid vote, my bill would provide a special quarterly allowance to parties in which 10% of their elected representatives are part of a designated group. A threshold of 10% was chosen because visible minorities were approximately 16.2% of the population in 2006, which was an increase over the 2001 level of 13.4%. In 2017, it is estimated that between 19% and 23% of Canadians will be from visible minorities, while aboriginals account for 1.2 million Canadians and persons with disabilities, 4.4 million. For each quarter, the allowance would be calculated as follows: 10¢ per year if the proportion of people from these groups is between 10% and 19% of the party's total elected members, 20¢ per year if that proportion is between 20% and 29%, and 30¢ per year if the proportion of people from these groups is more than 30%.

I hope that my colleagues will support both these bills.

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

* * *

• (1020)

[English]

PROTECTING CANADIANS ABROAD ACT

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-554, An Act to Protect Canadian Citizens Abroad.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce an act to protect Canadian citizens abroad in support of the foundational principle that all Canadian citizens, without discrimination, deserve the protection of the Government of Canada while detained, stranded, captured or disappeared abroad.

There are a number of high profile cases, including those of Maher Arar, Omar Khadr and Abousfian Abdelrazik, and the related jurisprudence that have underscored the need for legislation setting forth both the rights of Canadian citizens, as well as the threshold obligations of the Government of Canada and its consular services.

Accordingly, this legislation, the first ever of its kind, would affirm these rights and obligations, including rights to consular access, consular visits and repatriation; reporting requirements for Canadian officials when they suspect a Canadian detained or captured abroad has been or may be tortured; and requiring that the government request the repatriation of a Canadian detained abroad in

situations where there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Canadian has been or may be tortured, is being subjected to conditions constituting cruel or unusual punishment, or is being arbitrarily detained.

I trust that this bill will enjoy the support of all members of the House.

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

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IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-556, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (exception to inadmissibility).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to introduce a bill that speaks on behalf of those vulnerable people who are denied immigration status because of their health condition.

This bill looks to stop discrimination against people living with disabilities by improving our Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and making it fair and equitable.

I want to thank my former colleague, Judy Wasylycia-Leis, for all her work on this issue in the past, and her work in favour of those living with disabilities and protecting their rights.

The act currently suggests discriminating against people living with disabilities by prohibiting them from immigrating to Canada since they might represent an excessive burden on our society. That was the case of David and Sophie Barlagne, a French family that was told by the Federal Court that their daughter, Rachel, who has cerebral palsy, constituted an excessive demand on the social service resources of the province of Quebec, even though the family can support her. Through these actions, the government is telling the family that their child is a burden.

That is the reason this bill guarantees an opportunity of an appeal process for people with a disability who have applied for immigration but have been turned down. This bill would allow them to prove they have abilities that need to be recognized and that in fact they will not pose an excessive demand on our society, but on the contrary they can contribute greatly to our country.

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

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IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-557, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (appeals).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to introduce a bill that amends the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. It amends section 38 that excludes people with disabilities from immigrating to Canada, even though they have been accepted by the provincial government and have the financial means to support themselves.

Canada signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities while still systematically undermining it by falling back on old stereotypes.

Tonight in Toronto, the Canadian Paraplegic Association will be celebrating its 65th year of existence and of its excellent work.

No one should be deported or barred from Canada after becoming physically disabled in Canada. I urge all members to support equal rights for all persons in Canada.

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

* * *

• (1025)

CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-558, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (social condition).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to rise in the House today to present this bill. I would like to thank the member for Vancouver Kingsway for seconding this bill.

This bill is very important because it amends provisions of the Criminal Code to establish principles related to sentencing and describe the aggravating circumstances that require increased sentences to be imposed.

The bill requires an increased sentence where there is evidence that the offence was motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate based on social condition of the victim.

This bill is the companion to another bill that I will be introducing on social condition. It is done in recognition that there are people in our society who are disadvantaged because of social condition, because of poverty, homelessness, education and background and that they do face prejudice and discrimination. It is very important that we have the tools to address the reality they face in their daily lives.

I hope that all members will support this bill. This issue has been before the House many times. In fact, there have been many studies on the issue of social condition and how people do not have protection. This bill is aimed at addressing that to ensure there is dignity and respect for people based on social condition.

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

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CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-559, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act (social condition).

Routine Proceedings

She said: Mr. Speaker, this is the companion bill to the one I just introduced. I would like to thank the hon. member for Nickel Belt for seconding this bill.

This bill would amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of social condition. In doing so it would protect from discrimination people who are experiencing social or economic disadvantage, such as adequate housing, homelessness, source of income, occupation, level of education, poverty, or any similar circumstance. As the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation and many other organizations have pointed out, a person's standing in society is often determined by his or her occupation, income, education level or family background.

As legislators, we know that we must be aware that tools are very much needed to promote and protect the economic and social rights of Canadians. This bill would send an important message to the public that people who are disadvantaged because of their social condition are equally deserving of dignity and protection from discrimination.

I hope that all members of the House will support this bill.

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

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CELL PHONE FREEDOM ACT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-560, An Act respecting the locking of cellular telephones.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce the cell phone freedom act. This bill would take an important step toward providing more consumer choice and to promoting competition in the wireless market. It would strike a healthy balance on the issue of mobile phone network locks.

Most Canadian consumers do not know that their cell phones are locked to work only on the network of the carrier they bought their phone from and that they cannot easily move to a competitor. Unlike most other countries, Canada does not yet regulate these network locks. That diminishes competition. There is much less consumer choice and freedom of movement between service providers, and higher prices and worse services for consumers.

Routine Proceedings

The cell phone freedom act would level the playing field for Canadian cell phone customers. Consumers buying new cell phones in Canada would be informed of any network lock on their phones before sale. Phone companies would have to unlock new phones upon request, without charge, at the end of their service contracts.

Let us stand up for competition and consumers and support the cell phone freedom act.

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

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● (1030)

FISHERIES ACT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-561, An Act to amend the Fisheries Act (mining activities).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing a bill which would address a practice that is occurring with increasing frequency and which is of enormous concern to those of us who would like to see Canada's freshwater lakes better protected. This practice is the practice of mining companies asking for permission under the metal mining effluent regulations to use healthy freshwater lakes as dumping grounds for mine tailings.

Unfortunately, permission for that practice is being granted much too easily. This bill would close the loophole in the Fisheries Act which allows that practice to occur.

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

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BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, during the consideration of the Business of Supply on the last allotted day in the supply period ending June 23, 2010, at 6:30 p.m. the House shall proceed to the consideration of a motion or motions to concur in the Main Estimates, provided that, unless previously disposed of, a Member from each recognized party may speak for not more than 10 minutes on the motion, after which the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith, without further debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of the opposition motion and forthwith thereafter put successively, without debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of the motion or motions to concur in the Main Estimates and the Supplementary Estimates (A), and notwithstanding Standing Order 71, for the passage at all stages of any bill or bills based on the main or supplementary estimates.

The Speaker: Does the hon. chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two travel motions.

I move:

That eleven members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to travel to Quebec City, Quebec, to attend the Conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts, in August 2010 and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

The Speaker: Does the hon. chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

FINANCE

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, during its consideration of matters pursuant to Standing Order 83.1, the Standing Committee on Finance be authorized to adjourn from place to place within Canada and to permit the broadcasting of its proceedings thereon, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

The Speaker: Does the hon. chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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IRAN

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you were to seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, on the one-year anniversary of the fraudulent Iranian election, this House expresses its solidarity with the people of Iran; condemns the loss of life, beatings, and unjust imprisonment of those who peacefully protested; supports the democratic movement in Iran; welcomes the new UN sanctions against the Iranian regime; calls upon the regime to cease and desist from the illegal pursuit of nuclear weapons in violation of UN Security Council Resolutions and international law; and expresses its hope that the Iranian people will soon live in peace, security, and freedom.

● (1035)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Mount Royal have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Mr. Speaker, I request that Motion No. 547 be adopted by this place by unanimous consent.

I move, “That, in the opinion of the House, the government should engage in direct diplomatic efforts, in partnership with other countries and organizations, to have the government of the Russian Federation: (a) formally recognize the murder of Polish nationals in the spring of 1940 in the Katyn Forest in Russia, the Kalinin and Kharkov prisons and elsewhere as a war crime, as defined by Article 175 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and as a crime against the Polish state; and (b) release all documents and archives relating to this event to the Polish government at a public ceremony”.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member Parkdale—High Park have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[Translation]

PETITIONS

PAY EQUITY

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition regarding pay equity. I have gathered over 1,000 signatures of men and women from my riding who want all female workers in Quebec to be covered by legislation that guarantees equal pay for men and women, given that female workers who come under the Canada Labour Code do not enjoy the same protection as their co-workers who come under the Quebec Labour Code.

The petitioners also denounce the changes made—with the support of the Liberals—in the government's most recent budget, changes that make pay equity part of collective agreement negotiations. Rights are rights, and must not be toyed with.

[English]

AGRISTABILITY PROGRAM

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have before me a petition from many agriculture farmers and agri-business people in my riding. Food production in Ontario is threatened by factors beyond the control of its farmers. Federal and provincial programs designed to manage risk and stabilize income for farmers are no longer working favourably for the majority of producers and need to be repaired.

Therefore, my petitioners respectfully request that the House of Commons immediately move to amend the terms of qualification for the agristability program as proposed by the Ontario Agricultural Sustainability Coalition.

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just a little over a week ago, I had the privilege of introducing Bill C-527 to the House and petitions are already flooding in, in support of that bill. The petitioners are essentially saying that spousal homicide should not pay.

Routine Proceedings

Currently, it is possible for someone convicted of killing their spouse to collect CPP survivor benefits and/or the death benefit. It is also currently possible for someone convicted of killing their spouse to collect survivor benefits and/or the death benefit under the CPPD. It is a long-established principle in law that no one should be able to benefit from the commission of a crime and that principle must be enshrined in the eligibility criteria for government benefit programs.

The petitioners are asking Parliament to immediately pass Bill C-527, which amends the Canada pension plan to prohibit the payment of a survivor's pension, orphan's benefit or death benefit to a survivor or orphan of a deceased contributor if the survivor or orphan has been convicted of the murder or manslaughter of the deceased contributor.

While I know that the rules of the House do not permit me to endorse a petition, let me just say how delighted I am that people are taking up this cause in such an active way.

SUDAN

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition that was sent to me by Mr. Michael Destounis. It includes many signatories from my riding of Lac-Saint-Louis. The petition is for Canada to do more for peace in Darfur and, more generally, in Sudan.

There are a number of measures that the petitioners would like to see the government pursue. One is to pledge increased diplomatic, financial, logistical and training support to the United Nations and African Union, and to sustain and increase our humanitarian commitments to Sudan and especially to the Darfur region.

● (1040)

[Translation]

USE OF WOOD IN FEDERAL BUILDINGS

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition here today signed by several hundred citizens of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou who are calling on the House of Commons to quickly pass Bill C-429.

The petitioners believe that this bill sends a clear message to the Government of Canada and to the public about the many opportunities afforded by wood technology and the resources we have in Quebec and Canada, in addition to stimulating wood consumption. The petitioners are pointing out that passing such a bill would serve to help thousands of workers, businesses, families and communities affected by the forestry crisis and the forest itself, which needs to be cleaned up as soon as possible because of numerous forest fires.

In closing, I would like to say that I fully support the petitioners' initiative and I hope this government will consider it.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

CANADA POST

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have here over 700 names of people from South Okanagan and other parts of British Columbia who are concerned about the fact that Canada Post has announced that it will be removing mail processing from local cities, towns and communities in British Columbia, and sending it to Vancouver.

They are saying that this will result in the reduction of service and loss of good paying jobs, which will negatively affect communities already hit hard by the economic recession. They ask the Government of Canada to ensure that Canada Post does the following: support local economies by preserving local jobs and maintaining mail processing at post offices in local cities, towns and communities.

They ask that, prior to making any changes to their mail processing and transportation network, Canada Post conduct a thorough and in-depth study into the service and economic impact on local communities and, using those results, hold full, open and transparent consultation with the local communities that will be impacted by the changes.

They also ask that Canada Post reveal its long-term operational plans to Parliament and the Canadian public.

ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDATION

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition calling on the government to save the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. It has been signed by people across Canada from all provinces and territories.

Many signatories are deeply disappointed in the government's failure to support the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. While there are a few healing centres still in operation across the country, many first nations, Métis and Inuit people have lost critical healing programs in their communities.

Today, on the third day of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in my home province of Manitoba, the voices of Canadians stand loud and clear that the government has a duty to aboriginal people to live up to the historic apology and truly engage in a process of reconciliation.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling today a petition that has been signed by several dozen Canadians from the west: from Surrey, Burnaby and Vancouver, British Columbia, but also from eastern Canada: Toronto, Ottawa and Gatineau, Quebec. All of them are appealing to the Government of Canada to look again at the issue of the deportation order of José Figueroa.

Mr. Figueroa was a resident of El Salvador. He moved to Canada to escape a brutal right-wing military regime. He was involved politically with the FMLN, now the democratically elected and legitimate government of El Salvador. Inexplicably, the government is trying to deport him based on labelling the FMLN, the governing party in El Salvador, as a subversive organization.

These many petitioners from across Canada beg the government to reconsider this untenable position.

ECO-ENERGY RETROFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by dozens of people in my riding of Parkdale—High Park to bring attention to the decision by the government to not accept any further applications this year under the eco-energy retrofit program.

My constituents who signed the petition are urging the government to provide adequate funding to allow all Canadians to successfully claim grants under the program during the entire year of 2010, which it said it would do in the original budget. This follows the government's cancellation of the original retrofit program taking away programs for small business and for low incomes, and now stifling the one that it did restore.

The petition is signed by people generally disappointed with the government's lack of action on climate change, the one program that is working. They would like to see it resourced by the government ahead of its other priorities, obviously.

• (1045)

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today and the first is on the one we just heard about.

I would like to present a petition from my riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North signed by Canadians from there and across the country who are concerned with the government's cancellation this past March of the eco-energy retrofit program for homes. They point out that only a single day's notice was given for the cancellation of this vital program, leaving homeowners and small businesses at a loss.

They are calling upon the Government of Canada to either restore funding for that program or create an equivalent national home energy evaluation and retrofit program.

PENSIONS

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition and equally important is one from residents of Terrace Bay, Nipigon, Marathon, Schreiber, Gull Bay and Thunder Bay who are deeply concerned with the precarious financial situation many seniors face in this country. Petitioners point out that less than 40% of Canadians have workplace pensions and 300,000 seniors have to survive on poverty level incomes and that is unconscionable.

They call on Parliament to increase the guaranteed income supplement, to work to double the Canada pension plan benefits, and to develop a national pension insurance program.

AIR PASSENGERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

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

Routine Proceedings

The first is signed by dozens of Canadians. It calls on Parliament to adopt Canada's first air passengers' bill of rights, new Bill C-541. Only in the last six months the Obama administration in the United States has moved ahead of Canada by penalizing airlines for \$27,500 per passenger for tarmac delays over three hours and Ray LaHood recently charged Southwest Airlines \$120,000 for overbooked flights.

The Canadian bill of rights would compensate passengers on all Canadian carriers anywhere they fly. It would provide compensation for overbooked flights, cancelled flights and long tarmac delays. It would deal with late and misplaced baggage, and would require all-inclusive pricing by airlines in all of their advertising.

Europe has had an air passengers' bill of rights for over five years now. Recently, a passenger recounted to me how much better treatment he received in Europe than in Canada with the same airline. The new rules have to be posted at the airline counter. The airlines must inform the passengers of their rights and the process to file for compensation. If the airlines follow the rules, it will cost them nothing.

The petitioners call on the government to pass Canada's air passengers' bill of rights, Bill C-541.

EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE

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

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 233, 235, 238, 239, 240, 248, 251 and 252.

[Text]

Question No. 233—**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With respect to chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI), the "liberation" procedure, and multiple sclerosis (MS): (a) does Health Canada recognize the International Union of Pheology (IUP), and is Canada a member; (b) does Health Canada recognize the IUP's Consensus Document on the diagnosis and treatment of venous malformations; (c) will Health Canada be respecting the IUP's standards regarding diagnosis and treatment of venous malformations; (d) will the government work with the provinces and territories to establish imaging and treatment guidelines for CCSVI and, if so, over what timeline and, if not, why not; (i) what are the benefits and risks associated with imaging and treatment techniques; (ii) what are the costs for each of the identified methods; (e) will the government, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, commit to imaging MS patients for venous malformations, and treating those patients who require interventions and, if not, why not and, if so, (i) over what timeline, (ii) what barriers would have to be overcome; (f) is CCSVI recognized as an official diagnosis and, if so, by what professional medical organizations and how is it defined; (g) what is the cause of narrow veins in the neck or thorax and what methods could possibly be undertaken to reduce their occurrence either in utero, in childhood, or in adulthood; (h) with what medical conditions is CCSVI associated; (i) what are the potential health impacts of CCSVI in the short-term, medium-term and long-term, both with and without treatment; (j) what percentage of MS patients show one or more blocked veins; (k) what veins, other than the jugular veins, are commonly blocked, damaged, or twisted in the human body; (l) what imaging procedures are used to identify the problems, (ii) what interventions are required to address the problems and why, (iii) what are the possible health impacts if left untreated, (iv) are interventions time sensitive, (v) what are the costs of imaging procedures and treatment; (l) what specific methods are used

to investigate CCSVI, what costs are associated with each method, and what are the benefits and risks associated with these techniques; (m) where in Canada are these imaging methods available and, for each location, what procedures are offered and how much do they cost; (n) where in the world are private clinics emerging, what are their efficacy and safety records, and what are the imaging and treatment costs; (o) what percentage of MS patients show a reduction in MS attacks and brain lesions following the liberation procedure; (p) what percentage of MS patients with little or mild blockage show improvement following the liberation procedure; (q) what discussions is the government having regarding CCSVI, its imaging, and the possible link with MS; (r) what studies are government scientists conducting to assess the reliability and validity of imaging techniques, the possible association between CCSVI and MS, and to follow-up on patients who have undergone the liberation procedure; (s) how much money has the government allocated to research related to CCSVI, the liberation procedure and MS; (t) what is the estimated number of MS patients in Canada, and what is (i) the percentage who can no longer work, (ii) the percentage who depend on family caregivers, (iii) the percentage who require around-the-clock care from professional caregivers; (u) what is the estimated national annual economic impact of MS on families and healthcare plans; (v) what is the estimated national annual cost of disease-modifying therapies, including Copaxone and Interferon, for families and healthcare plans; (w) what are the projected imaging costs for CCSVI and treatment costs for MS patients who show a vascular abnormality; (x) what are the projected imaging costs for CCSVI and treatment costs for all MS patients; (y) what recommendations regarding CCSVI and imaging are being provided by the government to MS patients, particularly regarding (i) reputable imaging and treatment clinics, (ii) the pros and cons regarding venoplasty and stents, (iii) the need for continuing treatment regimes following any liberation procedure; (z) what steps is the government taking to educate MS patients about blogger patients and sham imaging and treatment centres; and (aa) what is the estimated number of Canadians who have gone overseas for imaging and treatment, and what tracking is being undertaken of their condition following such trips?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to Health Canada, questions related to the treatment and diagnosis of chronic cerebro-spinal venous insufficiency, CCSVI, are of a clinical nature and are best directed toward the provinces and territories and their respective physician associations. The Canada Health Act requires provincial and territorial health insurance plans to provide medically necessary hospital and physician services to their residents on a prepaid basis, and on uniform terms and conditions. The provincial and territorial governments, in consultation with their respective physician associations, are primarily responsible for determining whether new treatments for CCSVI are medically necessary for health insurance purposes.

Routine Proceedings

With respect to Canadian Institutes of Health Research, through the CIHR, the government is funding health research on multiple sclerosis, MS. In 2008-09 investments related to MS totalled approximately \$5.3 million. CIHR also invested \$120.5 million in the larger area of neurosciences research in 2008-2009 and approximately \$38 million in stem cell research which is being pursued for the potentially useful therapies it may offer in the treatment of health conditions and diseases such as multiple sclerosis. CIHR also funds a great deal of research related to stroke, much of which focuses on the vascular component of the disease. In 2008/09 CIHR funded approximately \$22.9 million in stroke research. All of these investments are building our overall understanding of multiple sclerosis toward more effective treatment and ultimately a cure. CIHR has been consulting with the research community and will be convening, in close collaboration with the MS Society, an international meeting of top scientists to identify research priorities for Canada and accelerate research and innovation on MS.

CIHR has not funded research on the possible relationship between MS and impaired venous drainage of the central nervous system or CCSVI since no researchers working in this area have applied for funding. However, CIHR is funding Drs. Bruce Pike and Douglas Arnold of McGill University who are working to advance functional magnetic resonance imaging to permit robust and continuous monitoring of cerebral blood flow, volume, and oxygen consumption. While their study is targeted to Alzheimer's patients, the results will also increase our knowledge of the role that obstructed blood flow may play in MS. Drs. Pike, Arnold and Dr. John Sled are also collaborating on research to develop an MRI technique more able to detect tissue damage than current methods. The research will allow the tissue damage in MS patients to be comprehensively and quantitatively assessed, will lead to increased knowledge on the natural evolution of the disease and will enable the evaluation of new therapies that attempt to slow or stop the progression of this disease.

It is quite possible that the recent interest in the possible relationship to multiple sclerosis of impaired venous drainage of the central nervous system, or, Chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI), will draw more scientists to pursue MS research. CIHR would welcome funding applications through its ongoing programs such as the Open Operating Grants competition. The next competition has a registration deadline date of August 16 and an application deadline date of September 15.

With respect to Public Health Agency of Canada, estimates from the 2000-2001 Canadian Community Health Survey indicate that approximately 57,600 Canadians aged 12 and older living in private households have been diagnosed with MS by a health professional. This estimate does not include individuals living in institutions. The National Population Health Study on Neurological Conditions announced by the federal Minister of Health on June 5, 2009 will provide additional data by 2013.

(i) Estimates from the 2000-2001 Canadian Community Health Survey indicate that of individuals aged 15 years to 75 years of age who have MS, 23% reported that they were permanently unable to work. Updated information on labour force participation among

individuals with MS will become available with the National Population Health Study on Neurological Conditions.

(ii) Although the 2000-2001 Canadian Community Health Survey included an optional module on home care, the survey module included too few individuals with MS to report reliable estimates of the percentage of MS patients who depend on family caregivers. The purpose of the 4-year National Population Health Study on Neurological Conditions is to fill gaps in knowledge about individuals with neurological conditions, their families, and caregivers.

(iii) An estimate of the percentage of MS patients in Canada who require around-the-clock care from professional caregivers is not currently available. A component of the 4-year National Population Health Study on Neurological Conditions will measure the prevalence of selected neurological chronic conditions among the institutionalized population and will provide new estimates on Canadians with neurological conditions, including MS, who are receiving care in nursing homes that provide 24-hour care.

The Public Health Agency of Canada estimates that the direct health care costs and costs from loss of economic productivity associated with MS in 2000-2001 were \$950.5 million. Direct costs associated with MS estimated in 2000-2001 were \$139.2 million: \$58.4 million for hospital care, \$12.1 million for physician care and \$68.7 million for drugs. Indirect costs associated with MS estimated in 2000-2001 were \$811.3 million: \$172.8 million (21.3%) in loss of productivity due to premature mortality and \$638.45 million (78.7%) in long-term disability costs. Short-term disability costs are not included in the estimates of morbidity costs, and therefore underestimate indirect costs. Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information, *The Burden of Neurological Diseases, Disorders and Injuries in Canada* (Ottawa: CIHI, 2007). www.cihi.ca

Question No. 235—Mr. Bill Siksay:

What is the government's position with regard to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and the development of a new NATO Strategic Concept?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the current NATO strategic concept review process will provide an opportunity for the NATO Alliance, Alliance, to take stock of developments in the international security situation and make adjustments to NATO nuclear policy, as necessary and appropriate. Canada supports a NATO nuclear policy that balances our strong commitment to non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament and our national security requirements.

Canada's longstanding policy objective is the non-proliferation, reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We continue to work with our allies in NATO toward achieving this goal.

Routine Proceedings

All NATO allies are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the alliance has repeatedly affirmed its full support and commitment to its implementation. NATO allies have maintained a long-standing commitment to non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament as an integral part of their security policy, and have repeatedly reaffirmed that these objectives will continue to play an important role in the achievement of NATO's security objectives.

That said, Allied efforts toward disarmament cannot be undertaken blindly, without due regard for Euro-Atlantic security. The continued existence of powerful nuclear forces outside of the alliance as well as the unpredictable nature of the future security environment necessitates the maintenance of a limited nuclear deterrent for the time being. The pursuit of nuclear and general disarmament is intimately intertwined with the global security context. As a NATO ally, Canada agrees that the supreme guarantee of the security of allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the alliance. The role of alliance nuclear forces today is fundamentally political—to preserve peace and prevent coercion and any kind of war—and the alliance consistently reaffirms that the circumstances in which their use might have to be contemplated are extremely remote. Together with NATO's conventional forces, nuclear forces constitute the means with which the alliance deters any threat of aggression against any NATO member state.

Although NATO continues to retain a credible nuclear deterrent, its stockpile of nuclear weapons in Europe has been reduced by over 90 percent since the height of the Cold War. The US and UK have also made significant cuts in their own national arsenals.

Canada supports NATO's continued commitment to nuclear disarmament and its willingness to adjust its nuclear forces in light of the changing security environment to achieve the collective goal of a nuclear weapon free world. Canada will continue to play an active role in discussions related these issues as we negotiate a new strategic concept for the alliance.

Question No. 238—Mr. Bill Siksay:

What steps, if any, will the government take at the upcoming Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference to further negotiations on the issues of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada aims to reaffirm its collective commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, NPT, and to make balanced progress on the three pillars of this important international instrument: disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of energy.

On May 3, 2010, the Minister of Foreign Affairs made Canada's opening statement at the start of the NPT review conference. The minister noted that on nuclear disarmament, states party must strive for implementation of commitments already accepted. In this regard, Canada welcomed the new START agreement, the newly released US nuclear posture review, and US efforts towards ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Canada calls upon all states party required for the entry-into-force of the CTBT to ratify this essential treaty as soon as possible.

Regarding the threat of nuclear proliferation, the minister noted that Canada has a long-standing commitment to strengthened

national and international efforts to ensure that weapons of mass destruction do not spread to states or terrorists prepared to use them under any circumstances. In this regard, he argued that an important step forward for the review conference would be to recognize that a comprehensive safeguards agreement together with an additional protocol represents the new verification standard.

Question No. 239—Hon. Carolyn Bennett:

With respect to Health Canada's vitamin D recommendations: (a) does the government plan to update them and, if so, (i) how, (ii) what is the timeline for the update, (iii) what research is Health Canada using in conducting the update; (b) what are the qualifications of the experts who will evaluate and select the research used to support any decision about the adequacy of Health Canada's current vitamin D recommended daily allowances; (c) is there current, accepted evidence to suggest that taking vitamin D in amounts higher than the recommended daily allowance is harmful; (d) what amount of vitamin D, if any, would be harmful to Canadians' health; (e) if there is an amount found to be harmful, what "harm" did the said amount cause; and (f) which studies were used to draw any conclusions found in (e)?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to a) i) In late 2008, the Canadian and US governments contracted with the US Institute of Medicine, IOM, to convene a multi-disciplinary panel of Canadian and U.S. experts, the expert committee, to undertake a study to reassess current relevant data and to update as appropriate the dietary reference intakes, DRIs, for vitamin D and calcium, last published in 1997. This will result in the delivery of a detailed report that is peer-reviewed according to the protocols of the Institute of Medicine and the U.S. National Research Council.

In response to a) ii) The report from IOM is expected to be publicly available in the fall 2010. It is planned that the implementation process for government programs, policies, guidelines and information will take place in 2011.

In response to a) iii) Health Canada supported the IOM review in a number of ways. Health Canada provided publicly available data on usual distributions of vitamin D intake, based on the 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey. Health Canada also worked jointly with Statistics Canada on a preliminary public release of blood 25-OH vitamin D results from the 2007-2009 Canadian Health Measures Survey. These results were essential for the IOM expert committee to take into consideration the Canadian vitamin D status in their deliberations. In addition, Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, the US Office of Dietary Supplements/National Institutes of Health and the US Food and Drug Administration funded the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to prepare the report "Vitamin D and Calcium: A Systematic Review of Health Outcomes", which was published in August 2009. The purpose of this review was to systematically summarize the evidence on the relationship between vitamin D, calcium, and a combination of both nutrients on a wide range of health outcomes.

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In response to b) The review of DRIs for vitamin D and calcium is being conducted by a 14-member expert committee appointed through standard procedures of the national academies. Expertise includes, but is not necessarily limited to the following areas: nutrition, infant nutrition, reproductive nutrition, pregnancy and lactation, dermatology, gerontology, epidemiology, biostatistics, bone and skeletal health, cardiovascular health, immunology, oncology, cellular metabolism, toxicology, genetics, factors affecting intensity of UVB radiation, and population monitoring methodology.

In response to c) An AHRQ report published in August 2007 entitled "Effectiveness and Safety of Vitamin D in Relation to Bone Health" did examine the question of whether intakes of vitamin D above current reference intakes lead to toxicities. A total of 22 trials reported data on toxicity-related outcomes, 21 of which used doses above current reference intakes.

Overall, there was fair evidence from adult trials that vitamin D supplementation above current reference intakes, with or without calcium supplementation, was well tolerated. However, there were challenges in conducting this part of the review because harms are often secondary outcomes and may not be reported completely, especially if they are not significant. Most of the trials were not designed to evaluate harms, were of small sample size, and had short duration of exposure to vitamin D. There is also a lack of data on toxicity outcomes in infants, children, and specific ethnic groups.

In response to d) As part of its review of the evidence, the IOM expert committee will try to set a tolerable upper intake level, UL, defined as the highest level of daily nutrient intake that is likely to pose no risk of adverse effects for almost all individuals in the general population. The UL is based on an evaluation conducted by using the methodology for risk assessment of nutrients.

Until the recommendations for vitamin D have been updated, Health Canada continues to recommend that Canadians follow the existing tolerable upper intake level, which for anyone over one year of age is 50 micrograms, 2000 IU, vitamin D per day from all sources, including milk and supplements.

In response to e) According to the dietary reference intakes, DRIs, for vitamin D and calcium published in 1997, the adverse effects of excess vitamin D are probably largely mediated by increasing calcium levels in the blood, and limited scientific evidence suggests that direct effects of high concentrations of vitamin D may be expressed in various organ systems, including kidney, bone, central nervous system and cardiovascular system. Human case reports of pharmacologic doses of vitamin D over many years describe severe effects at intake levels of 250 to 1250 micrograms per day, 10,000 to 50,000 IU/day.

The IOM expert committee is looking at more recent clinical scientific data with regard to amounts of vitamin D that may be considered harmful and the indicators of adverse effects.

In response to f) The full set of studies used will be made available in fall 2010 in the IOM report.

Question No. 240—Hon. Carolyn Bennett:

With respect to the \$500 million allotted in the 2009 budget and reallocated in the 2010 budget to Canada Health Infoway: (a) when will the funding be released; (b)

how will the funding be targeted; (c) how much of the funding will be focused on acute care facilities; (d) how much of the funding will be focused on physicians and integrated points of service for hospitals, pharmacies, community care facilities and patients; and (e) how much of the funding will be focused on physician electronic medical records?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada Health Infoway, Infoway, is an independent, not-for-profit corporation established in 2001 to accelerate the development of health information and communication technologies such as electronic health records (EHRs), telehealth and public health surveillance systems on a pan-Canadian basis. Its corporate members are the 14 federal, provincial and territorial deputy ministers of health. Infoway supports the development and implementation of eHealth technologies on a cost-shared basis with its provincial/territorial partners.

As part of the Government of Canada's economic action plan, EAP, budget 2009 included \$500 million for Infoway to support the goal of having 50% of Canadians with an EHR by 2010, to speed up the implementation of electronic medical record, EMR, systems for physicians and integrate points of service for hospitals, pharmacies, community care facilities and patients. Subsequent to the budget 2009 announcement, the federal government indicated that further due diligence would be conducted before the funds would be released. This included the monitoring of Infoway's response to the Auditor General of Canada's fall 2009 report, which contained a chapter on EHRs. Budget 2010 announced the government's intention to move forward with the transfer of these resources.

With regard to a) In March 2010, Health Canada and Infoway signed a funding agreement related to the \$500 million allocated through budgets 2009 and 2010. Under the new funding agreement, Infoway will periodically draw down on the allocation and is thus required to submit an annual cash flow statement, with supporting details, to access the federal funds. The first cash flow statement to draw-down upon the new funds is due by the end of June 2010. Funding will be disbursed to Infoway within forty-five, 45, days of the receipt and acceptance by the minister of the cash flow statement.

With regard to b) Through budget 2009/2010, the \$500 million funding is intended to continue work on EHRs and to support the implementation of electronic medical record, EMR, systems for physicians and integrate points of service for hospitals, pharmacies, community care facilities and patients.

In this context, Infoway is working to establish corresponding funding strategies. These will be articulated in Infoway's annual summary corporate plan, which is due to be released at the end of June 2010.

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With regard to c)d) and e) As noted above, Infoway is working to establish funding programs for the \$500 million allocated through budgets 2009 and 2010, which will be articulated in Infoway's annual summary corporate plan, which is due to be released at the end of June 2010.

Since the provinces and territories are responsible for the delivery of health care, they also set their respective priorities and funding allocations for eHealth. Accordingly, within the parameters set out in the annual summary corporate plan, Infoway will work with individual provinces/territories to disburse funds based on jurisdictional priorities.

Question No. 248—Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:

With regard to Health Canada's research on the stress response to aircraft noise:
(a) what studies have been conducted; (b) what are their results and conclusions; and
(c) what future research is planned?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to a) From 1993 to 1996, Health Canada published three conference papers on the development of a laboratory study of aircraft noise-induced stress on people.

The only Health Canada published studies with a specific focus on aircraft noise were two reviews of the scientific literature on aircraft noise. One is a peer reviewed journal article in 2007 on aircraft noise-induced sleep disturbance and the other is a 2001 report on aircraft noise, stress and cardiovascular disease.

Aircraft noise has appeared in other studies by Health Canada, such as a very preliminary field study designed to examine possible relationships between noise annoyance and stress. This was presented in a poster at a 2007 University of Ottawa 4th year honours thesis symposium.

Aircraft noise was also noted in a national survey of noise annoyance published in a 2002 HealthInsider report, Number 7, and a peer reviewed literature article in 2005.

Aircraft noise annoyance was also used as an example in a 2008 published analysis of how noise annoyance can be used as a health impact in environmental assessments.

A study of annoyance and disturbance of daily activities from road traffic noise was also published in 2008 based on a 2005 HealthInsider report (Number 14)

Health Canada has also published a total of three laboratory studies on the potential for noise-induced stress in either rats, two studies, one published in 2003 and the other in 2005, or people, one published in 2006, using noise sources other than aircraft noise.

In response to b) Results are listed below from the various published studies that are relevant to the potential for a stress response to aircraft noise.

In the review of aircraft noise and sleep disturbance, it was found that people living around airports show disturbed sleep in the form of awakenings and increased body movement. Aircraft noise is one reason, but it is responsible for less sleep disturbance than spontaneous awakenings and other indoor noise events.

The review of the scientific literature on aircraft noise and cardiovascular disease indicated that average blood pressure levels of schoolchildren exposed to aircraft noise were slightly elevated, however there was no conclusive proof that aircraft noise caused chronic stress in children. Also, in adults, although scientific studies have shown that short term exposure to intense noise can cause temporary stress responses such as increases in heart rate and blood pressure, there is no consistent evidence that chronic noise leads to hypertension. Furthermore, it was found that, although there was insufficient evidence to conclude that aircraft noise causes heart disease, some studies suggested that people who live for many years in areas with intense road traffic noise, may face a slight increase in the risk of developing heart disease.

In the review of the scientific literature on noise annoyance, it was found that there was some evidence to suggest an association between road traffic and neighbourhood noise levels and some stress related adverse effects e.g., hypertension and migraines. It was also found that on average a given long term exposure to aircraft noise makes a greater percentage of a population highly annoyed than would road traffic noise. Furthermore, in a national survey of road traffic noise annoyance in Canada, it was found that people who were highly annoyed by road traffic noise, also thought this annoyance had a negative impact on their health.

In a laboratory study, exposure of people to noise events during sleep did not appear to create a stress response. It was also inconclusive as to whether there were adverse effects on their sleep.

In the very preliminary field study where exposure to aircraft noise occurred, the number of subjects was too small to obtain reliable conclusions about any possible relationships between stress hormone responses and annoyance level.

In response to c) Health Canada plans the following research studies to help assess plausibility of a cause-effect relationship between noise, including that from aircraft, and stress related adverse health effects: i) examination of potential correlations between annoyance to road traffic noise and actual health effects reported in surveys, ii) a study of stress markers in noise exposed rats that are predisposed to hypertension.

The following future reviews are also planned: (i) for fiscal year 2010-2011, an interim review taking into account recent developments in the scientific literature on the potential for aircraft noise-induced stress-related adverse health effects - to update the Health Canada It's Your Health document on aircraft noise, (ii) for fiscal year 2011-2012, a comprehensive review paper on the scientific literature on potential links between stress, cardiovascular disease and environmental noise.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 251—Ms. Judy Foote:**

With respect to the New Veterans Charter, does Veterans Affairs Canada experience a cost-savings associated with the granting of the lump-sum Disability Award and Death Benefit, as compared to other longer-term assistance measures such as, but not limited to, the disability pension and health care benefits?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, programs under the new veterans charter were implemented with the objective of changing the focus of Veterans Affairs Canada programming from disability to wellness for Canadian Forces clients and their families. The new design provides an up-front, lump sum payment to recognize the non-economic impacts of service-related disability, as well as ongoing support through rehabilitation and financial benefits to those who need it. This means that those with the greatest need receive the greatest support from Veterans Affairs Canada to aid in their successful transition to civilian life, where possible. Savings are possible in the longer term if the wellness programs of the new veterans charter work as planned to support modern-day Veterans through the transition to civilian life, thereby reducing dependence on pension payments to provide adequate, ongoing income support, a purpose that disability pensions were never intended to have. The object of the new veterans charter is not reducing cost but rather getting better value for money.

To cover additional front-end costs, government injected \$740 million into Veterans Affairs reference levels to cover the first five years of the implementation of the new veterans charter programs. Over time, as the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programming is realized, financial savings are possible, but savings are not a goal of the new veterans charter. This new programming strikes a balance between being financially responsible and accountable to Canadian taxpayers while still providing required benefits and services to meet the needs of our clients. At the time of its development in 2005 and implementation in 2006, the new veterans charter was projected to breakeven by 2025. However, it should be noted that the projection is impacted by the nature of military operations between the date of the forecast and 2025.

Question No. 252—Ms. Judy Foote:

With respect to the new Veterans Charter and the tax-free, lump-sum Disability Award and Death Benefit for fiscal years 2005-2006 to 2008-2009: (a) how many Disability Award or Death Benefit files have been forwarded to the Deputy Minister or Minister of Veterans Affairs' because of problems associated with the lump-sum payment; (b) how many recipients of the lump-sum Disability Award or the Death Benefit filed a complaint with the department about the lump-sum payment; (c) after receiving a lump-sum payment, how many recipients or their dependants have requested additional funds; and (d) has Veterans Affairs Canada reviewed or evaluated the lump-sum Disability Award and Death Benefit programs and, if so, what findings or conclusions have been made?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to a) Veterans Affairs Canada does not have a process to capture this specific information.

In response to b) Since the start of the new veterans charter program, from April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2009, there have been 1, 234 medical departmental reviews requested specifically for disability awards. This represents approximately 5% of the total number of applications received.

Of those 1, 234 medical department reviews, 758 have been deemed favourable after applicants provided new evidence. 406 have been deemed unfavourable. There are 70 cases where no decision could be made as it was determined that the department did not have jurisdiction at the time to proceed with the review, for example the Veterans Review and Appeal Board had jurisdiction.

In response to c) Since the start of the new veterans charter program, April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2009, there have been 6,082 reassessments requested specifically for disability awards.

In response to d) The new veterans charter was implemented on April 1, 2006. Monitoring is underway and adjustments to new veterans charter programs will be considered accordingly. In addition, Veterans Affairs Canada's audit and evaluation division is currently conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the new veterans charter. This evaluation is divided into three phases with a report developed for each phase.

Phase I—focus on the relevance and rationale of the new veterans charter and its programs; Phase II—focus on outreach and the service delivery framework; Phase III—focus on unintended impacts and the success in achieving desired outcome.

The reporting is scheduled to be completed by December 2010.

The department also evaluates feedback on the new veterans charter programs, including the disability award and death benefit, as it is received. For example: 1) The department continues to consult with veterans' organizations to hear their concerns. 2) The special needs advisory group, which has been in place since the beginning of the new veterans charter, has submitted four reports, providing observations and recommendations for Veterans Affairs Canada's consideration with regard to improving the new veterans charter from a special-needs veterans' perspective. 3) The new veterans charter advisory group has also undertaken a study of new veterans charter programs. Their findings and recommendations were detailed in a report, which was submitted to the department in October. The department will continue to explore and analyse the findings of evaluations/reviews of the new veterans charter, as well as feedback received internally and from clients, to maximize existing authority to the benefit of our clients and to consider if, and where, there might be gaps in that authority.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, furthermore, if Questions Nos. 231, 232, 234, 236, 247, 249 and 250 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 231—Mr. Paul Dewar:

With respect to training offered to members of the Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces: (a) what mission-related training is offered on gender; (b) what mission-related training is offered on sexual and gender-based violence; (c) what mission-related training is offered on United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889; (d) what mission-related training is offered on the integration of local female civilian, military and police personnel in operations; (e) what mission-related training is offered on strategies to promote the meaningful participation of local women and their national organizations in civil-military relations; and (f) for the types of training mentioned in subquestions (a) to (e), (i) who administers the training, (ii) who has access to the training, (iii) for each course, how many hours of instruction are provided, (iv) which courses are mandatory and which are optional?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 232—Mr. Paul Dewar:

With regard to Canada's transfer of detainees to Afghan authorities, what are the names and positions of individuals who received the originals or copies of the following documents: KANDH-0029; KANDH-0032; IDR-0512; correspondence between Richard Colvin and CEFOM-J9 and CEFOM-J3 from August 21 to September 19, 2006; KBGR-0118; KBGR-0121; KBGR-0160; KBGR-0258; "Detainee Diplomatic Contingency Plan", approved by Margaret Bloodworth, National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister, April 2007; KBGR-9261; KBGR-0263; KBGR-0265; KBGR-0267; KBGR-0269; KBGR-0271; May 3, 2007 unnumbered detainee report; May 4, 2007 additional unnumbered detainee report; KBGR-0274; KBGR-0275; KBGR-0291; KBGR-0292; June 21, 2007, KBGR on detainees; KBGR-0302; and KBGR-0321?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 234—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:

With respect to nutrition in Canada: (a) does the government recognize good nutrition as a basic human right; (b) how is food insecurity defined by the government, and what factors are responsible for it in Canada; (c) what action, if any, has the government taken to address each of the factors as identified in the answer to (b); (d) what action, if any, has the government taken to promote nutrition in Canada and which specific populations have been targeted; (f) does Canada have a comprehensive initiative that aims to reduce undernutrition and hunger at the national scale and, if so, (i) what is it, and if not, (ii) why not; (g) what successes has the current government had in building on effective programs to reduce food insecurity, undernutrition and hunger, and what barriers has it had to overcome; (h) has the government facilitated communications between the provinces and territories concerning the best methods of improving infant, child and adolescent nutrition in Canada and, if so, (i) on what dates and what were the recommendations and, if not, (ii) why not; (i) what are the names of all food security, nutrition, hunger prevention, etc. stakeholders with whom the government meets; (j) what percentage of Canadian families seeks assistance from food banks, and how has this changed over the last 20 years; (k) what percentage of Canadian infants, children and adolescents require assistance from food banks to meet their nutritional needs, and are all their needs met; (l) what action, if any, has the government taken to address in particular the nutrition of pregnant women and children through two years of age; (m) what percentage of Canadian children and adolescents experience food insecurity or hunger, and how does this translate into numbers, how have these data changed over the last 20 years, and for what reasons; (n) has the government considered a national breakfast, lunch or snack program to help ensure that children and adolescents meet

their nutritional needs; (o) how does the government define the categories overweight and obese, and what percentage of Canadian infants, children, and adolescents are overweight and obese; (p) how does socio-economic level impact overweight and obesity in Canadian infants, children, and adolescents; (q) what are the medical and psychological complications of child and adolescent overweight and obesity; (r) how has childhood overweight and obesity increased in Canada over the last 20 years, and what action, if any, has the current government taken to address the situation; (s) how has type 2 diabetes increased in Canadian children and adolescents over the last 20 years; (t) how many treatment centres for childhood and adolescent obesity exist in Canada, and has the government increased or decreased funding to these, and by what percentage; (u) what action, if any, has the government taken to expand the number of child obesity treatment centres; (v) what action, if any has the government taken to facilitate communications between the provinces and territories concerning successful overweight and obesity prevention and treatment programs, and replication of what is working well; (w) what action, if any, has the government taken to support research and evaluation of childhood overweight and obesity prevention, including behavioural, dietary, environmental, pharmacological, and physical activity approaches, and treatment initiatives; (x) what analysis, if any, has the government undertaken of nutrition programs in other jurisdictions, such as the United Kingdom and the United States; and (y) what consideration, if any, has been given to the Pennsylvania program that has led to more than 80 supermarkets being set up in unserved areas in the last five years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 236—Mr. Bill Siksay:

With regard to nuclear disarmament: (a) what official statements has the government made with reference to United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon's five point plan for nuclear disarmament; (b) what actions, if any, has the government taken to support this plan; and (c) what actions, if any, will the government take to start the preparatory work necessary for the negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 247—Hon. John McKay:

With regard to the government's \$220 million contribution to the Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund: (a) how much of this money has been committed or spent to date; (b) how much of this money has been committed or sent to Canadian NGOs; (c) will the contributions of \$40.92 million to the Canadian Red Cross Society and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, \$2 million to Oxfam Quebec, \$4.1 million to Save the Children, and \$6.8 million to World Vision that the government has announced thus far be coming from the Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund; (d) how much of this money has been committed or sent through bilateral or multilateral aid channels, for example, will the \$8 million contribution to the World Bank to help cancel Haiti's debt come from the Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund; (e) how much of the remaining money in the Fund will be made available to Canadian NGOs; (f) how do NGOs access this money; (g) what priorities guide CIDA's use of these funds; (h) how were these priorities established; and (i) did Canadian NGOs have any input in the process of determining these priorities?

(Return tabled)

*Business of Supply***Question No. 249—Mr. Claude Gravelle:**

With regard to the Community Futures Program: (a) is Industry Canada still responsible for administering this program and, if so, which section or agency of Industry Canada is responsible for the administration of the program and its support of Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs) in Northern Ontario; (b) currently, how many northern CFDCs are there in existence, and how much funding do they each receive; (c) are there any plans for additional northern CFDCs or reductions in the number of northern CFDCs and, if so, how many and where; (d) how many staff at Industry Canada have responsibilities related to the Community Futures Program overall; (e) to what departmental section, division, or agency are they assigned; (f) what is the organizational relationship between the Southern Ontario Development Agency and the Community Futures Program; (g) does the Southern Ontario Development Agency have any responsibilities as concerns northern CFDCs; (h) are there any plans to transfer responsibilities for northern CFDCs from FedNor to the Southern Ontario Development Agency; (i) are there any plans to transfer staff at FedNor, who are currently responsible for the Community Futures Program in Northern Ontario, to the Southern Ontario Development Agency; and (j) will the Community Futures Program be subject to the five per cent budgetary cut announced for Industry Canada and, (i) if so, on what basis would these cuts be made, (ii) if not, will the five per cent cut to Industry Canada's budget have any impact on the Community Futures Program and, if so, what kind of an impact?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 250—Mr. Claude Gravelle:

With regard to FedNor: (a) what is the total staff complement for FedNor for each of its programs and in what locations, for the fiscal years 2006-2007 to 2009-2010 and currently; and (b) what are the staffing projections for FedNor for each of its programs, and in what locations, for 2010-2011?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PROROGATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (House Leader of the Official Opposition, Lib.) moved:

That a special committee of the House be hereby established to undertake an immediate study of all relevant issues pertaining to prorogation, including the circumstances in which a request that Parliament be prorogued would be appropriate or inappropriate, and the nature of any rule changes (either by way of the Standing Orders or legislation or both) that may be necessary to avoid any future misuse of prorogation;

that, as part of this study, the committee take into account the specific proposals for new rules pertaining to prorogation offered by the Leader of the Opposition, including: (a) a requirement that the Prime Minister give Parliament written notice in advance of any request to prorogue, together with his/her reasons therefore; (b) a requirement that there be a debate in the House of Commons after any such notice is given, but before any request for prorogation is made; (c) a requirement that the express consent of the House of Commons be obtained at the conclusion of any such debate if (i) fewer than 12 months have passed since the last Speech from the Throne, (ii) the requested prorogation is for a period of more than 30 days, or (iii) an issue of confidence is outstanding before the House; and (d) a provision that allows committees of Parliament to continue to function during any prorogation; and

that the special committee report to the House no later than June 23, 2010.

The Speaker: Since today is the final allotted day for the supply period ending June 23, 2010, the House will go through the usual procedures to consider and dispose of the supply bills.

In view of recent practices, do hon. members agree that the bills be distributed now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1050)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to present this motion about ways to prevent the potential misuse of prorogation in our parliamentary system.

As I do so, let me note that I will be sharing my time this morning with the deputy opposition House leader, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. Among other things, she will be addressing some technical issues that have arisen since this motion first appeared on the order paper in April. We want to ensure that the motion is fully up to date.

Since notice circulated yesterday that this motion on prorogation was the topic we intended to offer for debate today, a couple of members from across the way have asked me privately why this particular choice was made, given that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs has a prorogation study under way. That is a fair question, and I am happy to answer it.

The official opposition is, of course, fully aware of the work being done in the procedure committee, because we were the ones who initiated that work by that committee. However, there are at least four reasons why this motion today should proceed in any event.

First, the procedure committee is a very busy committee of this House. It is doing good work, but time is rapidly slipping by. The House is about to adjourn for the summer. As the Speaker just mentioned, we are on the final supply day. The last time the House adjourned for any significant amount of time, the Prime Minister, of course, took the further step of proroguing the House and Parliament altogether. Therefore, that threat of prorogation still hangs over Parliament.

In my view, and in our view on this side of the House, we need to put more effort into finding practical solutions to the prorogation issue. We need to put more horsepower behind this particular issue at this time.

Second, this motion is more comprehensive than the one before the procedure committee. It includes specific ideas for solutions to illegitimate requests for prorogation. The ideas include, for example, the requirement that the Prime Minister give notice that he intends to make a request for prorogation, and in addition, that he supply reasons as to why that request is reasonable.

There is also the suggestion that there ought to be a debate in this House after the notice is given but before the prorogation request is actually made.

Third, there is the suggestion in our motion that in certain circumstances, not only should there be a debate, but the formal consent of the House of Commons should be required, where appropriate.

Finally, we make the suggestion that, prorogation notwithstanding, the committees of the House of Commons, and indeed of the Senate, should continue to have the ability to function during a prorogation so that the wheels of democracy are not completely foreclosed.

For those reasons and because of the fact that our motion provides some specific suggestions to address the problem, we believe, again, that it is a timely and important motion to put forward.

With respect to the study under way in the procedure committee, it is, unfortunately, a rather invisible process. That is not a criticism of that committee. However, the issue is one that deserves greater public visibility.

This being the last opposition day in this sitting before the summer, it is timely to give the prorogation travesty some public profile once again.

This sitting began with a shameful padlock on Canadian democracy from December to March. The central institutions of parliamentary accountability were shut down, wrongfully, in our view. We all need to be reminded of that outrage and reminded of the spontaneous outrage of hundreds of thousands of ordinary Canadians who knew instinctively that what was going on with prorogation at that time was wrong.

Nearly a quarter of a million Canadians signed petitions on this subject. Thousands more turned out to public rallies. A hundred and thirty experts on parliamentary affairs and constitutional law wrote to the Prime Minister to point out the defects in what he was doing. Editorial opinion across the country was strongly averse to what the government and what the Prime Minister were doing with prorogation. They said, with a single loud voice, that it is wrong, and we want our democracy back. It is important to keep the public profile of this issue.

● (1055)

We need to make the point that prorogation is sadly a metaphor for something that is even worse. It is one way, but not the only way, this rather paranoid Conservative government tries regularly and relentlessly to avoid accountability, to subvert transparency, to muzzle criticism, to stifle dissent, and to silence voices that have the temerity to disagree with the government and to speak truth to power.

It all began with prorogation, and Parliament cannot allow that anti-democratic behaviour to be considered normal.

Back in 2005, the person who is now the Prime Minister of Canada said this:

When a government starts trying to cancel dissent or avoid dissent...is when it's rapidly losing its moral authority to govern.

Dissent is not tolerated by the Prime Minister, not in his cabinet, not in his caucus, and not even in Parliament, which he has padlocked twice in the past year and a half when the House of Commons kept asking tough questions about what the House considered to be Conservative wrongdoing.

Even more seriously, the Prime Minister resorts to character assassination and intimidation as an all too frequent partisan tactic.

Business of Supply

Think for example of Linda Keen, the former president of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. Think of Paul Kennedy, the former head of the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP. Think of Peter Tinsley, the former head of the Military Police Complaints Commission. Think of Kevin Page, the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Think of the independent officers of Parliament who are intended to supervise such fundamental things as free and fair elections, access to information, and ethics. They have all been vilified by the government when they looked into evidence of Conservative misconduct.

Perhaps the greatest abuse was aimed at long-time public servant and diplomat Richard Colvin, who dared to speak truth to power about the risk of torture in Afghanistan. His reputation was viciously maligned to belittle him personally, but equally, to intimidate other public servants and keep them from reporting wrongdoing.

Beyond the political precinct, think of church organizations, such as Kairos. Think of foreign aid groups, such as the Canadian Council for International Co-operation. Think of a vast array of women's organizations. Think of the Canadian Council on Learning. They have all had their funding slashed and have been intimidated by the government for dissenting from Conservative dogma.

All of these concerns have recently been verified and amplified by many of Canada's top journalists. Let me quote from the Canadian Press news service on June 11, just a few days ago, when it said this:

Journalism associations from across the country have issued a stern rebuke against the [present] government and called on reporters to fight back against its tight information control...."Under [this] Prime Minister...the flow of information out of Ottawa has slowed to a trickle. Genuine transparency is replaced by slick propaganda and spin designed to manipulate public opinion.

Now we have the ultimate absurdity of the Prime Minister purporting to dictate to Parliament who can be called as witnesses to testify before parliamentary committees and who cannot. Contrary to the powers of Parliament, and contrary to law, the Prime Minister is trying to shield political staff members who work for him and his cabinet from being called to testify. He says that they are too junior, and it is too tough on them to appear before these committees.

These people are not little kids. They earn six-figure salaries, up to \$150,000 or more. They handle the government's most sensitive files. They manage things such as the lobbying activities of people like Rahim Jaffer. They interfere directly and personally in the release of information being processed under Canada's access to information law, and they make profound government policy announcements, such as, for example, the news that the government was going to prorogue Parliament last December and padlock Canadian democracy until March. Interestingly enough, that announcement was not made by the Prime Minister. It was made by his press secretary.

These examples simply show the absurdity of the government's position. It brings us full circle to the prorogation issue itself, and it illustrates again why this motion is up for debate today and why the House of Commons should adopt it.

Business of Supply

● (1100)

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the question on Canadians' minds would be this: Of all the possible issues the Liberals could possibly bring forward for us to discuss today, issues about the economy or crime, for example, why on earth would they bring this issue forward when they know full well that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs has been studying this motion for three months?

Is the hon. member aware that three of his members—their whip, the Liberal deputy whip, and the Liberal deputy House leader—are all currently sitting on a committee that is studying this very issue? How does he answer to Canadians that of all the issues we could be speaking about today, we are talking about an issue like this rather than about an issue like the economy, like crime, or like the upcoming summits?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to answer that question.

Nothing is more fundamental to every one of the issues that he mentioned than a properly functioning democracy. If the principles by which this place and all of the committees operate are undermined by the capricious ability of the cabinet, the government and the Prime Minister to simply shut the place down, stifle debate, close it off, put a padlock on democracy, then all of the issues that the hon. gentleman mentioned would not be discussed anywhere in this country if prorogation gets out of hand, as it has under the Conservative government.

Prorogation was not an issue in this country between 1873 and 2008. From John A. Macdonald to the current Prime Minister, no prime minister has abused the privileges and the prerogatives of prorogation. However, in 2008 and 2009 it was abused and it shut down the ability of Parliament to discuss those issues or any other issues.

Nothing is more fundamental than having a properly functioning democracy. That is why 250,000 Canadians signed those petitions just three or four months ago to say that what the government was doing was wrong and that they wanted their democracy back so we could debate freely, fairly and without intimidation those issues that the parliamentary secretary mentioned and every other one that is important to Canadians.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when this was brought to my attention yesterday I was bemused.

I understand prorogation is a hot issue with the Liberals, as it is with us, but this motion calls for a special committee. If I am right, this motion has been kicking around for a number of months and it would seem that at the last minute, after the official opposition fought to get more opposition days, it just reached on a shelf and picked one item to fill in the time with it.

The motion calls for a special committee but we already have a committee that has been holding meetings for months. I did not hear all of the member's remarks, but the motion calls for a report that would be due in six days.

I would like to know why this motion is even in front of us since it does not seem to make an awful lot of sense.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman would make an awful lot more sense if he bothered to pay attention to the discussion. He said that he missed the first part of the debate, so it is understandable why he does not get the point. That was all dealt with in the few minutes while he was outside the House, I gather, from what he just said.

The procedure committee is a very busy committee. It has been dealing with this issue for some considerable length of time but it has not yet produced a product. It has not produced an output. The House is about to adjourn for the summer. Does the member remember the last time the House adjourned for any significant period of time? The government prorogued it altogether. What happens if we get to the adjournment of the House in three or four days or maybe later this afternoon and the Prime Minister wakes up on Monday morning and decides to prorogue again?

It is time for action to be taken on this file and it is time to move it forward. It is all very well and good for the member to say that another committee is looking at the subject but we need to get some horsepower behind this issue to find a solution, not just more talk.

● (1105)

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague, the House leader of the official opposition, has very clearly and succinctly explained the reason for this motion on this Liberal opposition day.

[English]

I have listened to the questions that have been asked by a member from the government side and a member from the NDP. It is clear that they are looking at it from a very narrow point, because our motion and the statement that has been made by the House leader for the Liberal opposition and the amendment that I will be moving will make clear that this issue of prorogation goes beyond simple prorogation.

The Prime Minister's latest tactics to cover up his government's role in the Afghan detainee scandal was to stop the business of Parliament dead. Everybody knows that. Thousands upon thousands of Canadians rose up in protest to that.

While the Prime Minister attempted to claim that the prorogation of Parliament was routine, I believe that my colleague, the House leader for the Liberal opposition, made quite clear that from 1867 to 2008 no previous prime minister had ever abused prorogation or had ever used it to try to hide from the will, decision and authority of Parliament. Not until the current Conservative Prime Minister did we see abuse of prorogation.

Our motion is not outdated. Our motion goes beyond the scope of what the procedure and House affairs committee is dealing with. In fact, the study that is being conducted as we speak in that committee is a motion that I brought to that committee. So, I know very well what is happening.

The current Prime Minister now holds the record for shutting down Parliament for 148 days over just four years in office. That is compared to the second place prime minister, Jean Chrétien, who prorogued 145 days over 10 years, a full decade.

My colleague also talked about how it goes beyond simply flouting the authority of Parliament, the supremacy of Parliament. Let us talk about the statement that the government has tabled that it will no longer permit its political staffers to appear before standing committees of this House who have been duly called before those committees.

Let us talk about how the government is stifling and smothering any kind of dissent. Let us talk about how, in a democracy, freedom of expression is one of the very principle tenets of a democracy, of democratic institution. Let us talk about how freedom of expression means that dissent is healthy, and how the Conservative government and the Conservative Prime Minister refuse to see dissent and healthy, objective, fair criticism as being an integral part of a democratic system, an integral part of all of our democratic institutions.

Let us talk about how we have what the government considers to be fringe groups, not-for-profit organizations and non-governmental organizations, that do excellent work, provide services to Canadians here in Canada and services to people in impoverished countries outside of Canada, but because they have criticized some of the government policies they have been smothered. Their funding has been cut.

• (1110)

Women's groups are considered to be fringe groups. A member of the Conservatives' own caucus, the senator from the other house, Nancy Ruth, told the truth to a gathering of women's groups when she said, "I have to tell you, shut the f— up because, if you don't, I'm afraid that my own government, my own Prime Minister will come down on you even harder".

The issue of prorogation goes well beyond just the supremacy of this Parliament. It goes to the issue of freedom of expression, supremacy of Parliament and the need for dissent in a democracy.

I move:

That the motion should be amended:

a) by adding after the words "during any prorogation" in section (d) the following: "that the special committee also take into account any report on prorogation that may be forthcoming from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, and provide an analysis of the consequences of the use of prorogation as a device to avoid accountability or to silence voices that may wish to express disagreement with the government;

that the committee consist of 11 members which shall include 5 members from the government party, 3 members from the official opposition, 2 members from the Bloc Québécois and 1 member from the New Democratic Party, provided that the chair shall be from the official opposition;

that the committee have all of the powers of a standing committee as provided in the standing orders;

that the members to serve on the said committee be appointed by the whip of each party depositing with the Clerk of the House a list of his or her party's members of the committee no later than June 23, 2010;

that membership substitutions be permitted to be made from time to time, if required, in the manner provided for in Standing Order 114(2); and

b) by deleting the words "June 23, 2010" and substituting the following: "November 2, 2010".

Business of Supply

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In order for an hon. member to move an amendment, the consent of the person who brought forward the motion in the first place is required. Is it accepted.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

• (1115)

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am curious. The amendment now before us is that we change the date in the motion that was tabled, which was that a special committee report would be due in six days, to now make it November. This just gets curiously and curiously, so I am further curious.

We now have a committee, and the hon. member has been present for most of the meetings that I and other members have been at. I am curious about what the member would do with all the committee work that has been done so far. Do we just throw that all overboard and start over? Just exactly what, from a practical point of view, does the official opposition want us to do with the amendment in front of us calling for a special committee when we already have a committee doing working exactly that issue?

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, clearly the member did not have an opportunity to hear the actual motion that was delivered by my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, nor my amendment.

Both the principal motion and my amendment make it clear that the committee would take into account any report that may be tabled by the procedure and House affairs committee to the House in its own work, the work of the special legislative committee that we hope the House will support.

My colleague, who I sit with on procedure and House affairs, is being histrionic. Part of the work of that committee is done only on the aspect of prorogation. It does not deal with all the other aspects of the Liberal motion being debated today.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to a number of ways, other than prorogation, in which the government had disrespected the House, parliamentary committees and Canadians.

I am the chair of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We have been looking at a number of women's organizations that have been denied funding. When we look at them, they all have one thing in common. Many of these organizations have been working for 15 to 25 years and producing excellent results under that department. They have been denied funding because they dared to speak out against some of the attitudes toward women that have come out of the government and some of the changes in the Status of Women department.

Everyone know these things. What can one do to ensure the government begins to respect Parliament once again?

Business of Supply

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, prorogation is part of a much larger trend of the Conservative government trying to silence the opposition. The government has a record and a history of attacking what it calls fringe groups. Clearly, for the government, women's organizations are part of these fringe groups.

One only has to look at the fact that the very first act of the Conservative government in 2006 was to cut the funding to the court challenges program, a program that was specifically designed to provide financial assistance for important court cases that advanced equality rights and language rights guaranteed under the Canadian Constitution. Then, on April 1, 2006, it closed down 12 of the 16 Status of Women Canada offices. Today, only four regional offices exist.

Meanwhile, while all of this is happening, Canadian women only earn 71¢ on the dollar earned by males. Yet the government says that it does not need to help women's groups. Funding has been cut to women's groups and those groups and their voices are being smothered by the government. That is the first terrible step in eroding democracy.

• (1120)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are very few occasions that I actually agree with anything members from the New Democratic Party say in this place. However, in this case, I have to agree and totally concur with a comment made offline just a few moments ago by my colleague from Hamilton Centre, when he spoke from his seat and said that the motion brought forward today from the opposition was a joke, and it is a joke.

The motion stated quite clearly, when it was put on the order paper, that a special committee of Parliament be struck to examine prorogation and report back to the House in four sitting days. Who could take a look at that and not laugh out loud? It is absolutely ridiculous?

I know the official opposition House leader and the opposition deputy House leader have tried to put their best spin on things by saying that this will be different, that this will be a better version of what is already occurring in procedure and House affairs. However, it is just an attempt by the official opposition members to make good on something that is a complete embarrassment to them. They are trying to justify this opposition day motion, which is absolutely ridiculous. I have never seen anything like it in my six years in Parliament.

Opposition days are supposed to be taken up with matters of major concern to not only the opposition party, but to Parliament. As has been heard on several occasions today, there already is a study on prorogation under way. It has been ongoing for the last two and a half to three months, being studied by the procedure and House affairs committee. We have heard excellent testimony in those committee hearings from a wide variety of constitutional experts and experts on parliamentary procedure and conventions. That committee is going to be producing a report, I would suggest, sometime this fall, and I believe it will be a well reasoned, well founded and well intentioned report on prorogation.

What do we have here today? We have an opposition day motion that was put on the order paper about two months ago. Then the opposition did not even read its contents before it put it forward for debate today. When the Liberals finally realized how ridiculous this was, I am sure they had a couple of moments of utter panic about how to put the best spin possible on it.

The opposition House leader, whose name was on the original motion, tried to convince members of the House that the motion is a good one because it goes far beyond the study of prorogation being currently conducted by procedure and House affairs. Then the deputy House leader of the opposition moved an amendment that said the June 23 deadline for the committee report should now be extended until November.

Notwithstanding the fact that this amendment would result in \$10,000 for the Liberal chair of a new special committee, because the Liberals are suggesting that an official opposition member chair the special committee and there is a monetary compensation for that chair, one could argue they are looking at setting up a special committee to pad one of their friends' bank accounts in the Liberal ranks. However, I think it goes far beyond that. I think it is far more basic than that.

What has happened today and what we are seeing first-hand is the opposition party screwed up and it screwed up royally. The Liberals did not know what was contained in their own opposition day motion until it was placed on the order paper and then they were stuck with it. When they finally realized that this made them look like a bunch of fools, they had to come in here today and try to convince people that it was part of their master plan. They really wanted to discuss prorogation, but in a different light, with a different committee, and extend the deadline from June 23 to November.

This was absolutely embarrassing and it was an insult to members of this place and to the members of the procedure and House affairs committee. For two and a half to three months, those members have been doing exemplary work, conducting a study of prorogation. I had to stifle a laugh when the deputy House leader said that they were going to expand the terms of reference.

• (1125)

Everyone in this place knows that committees are the masters of their own fate. They can expand the terms of reference if they wish. There is no need for a special committee to discuss and study prorogation when the current committee studying prorogation could expand its terms of reference if it wanted. If, at the end of its initial foray into the examination of prorogation, it decided it wanted to go a bit further and take a look at a couple of other areas which were affected by prorogation, the committee has the full right to do so. There was no time limit given to the committee on when it had to conclude its study on prorogation. There were no constraints put on the committee as to what it was restricted to study.

All we have heard today from members of the official opposition is just a smokescreen to try to convince Canadians that they are not as incompetent as it obviously appears to everyone in this place, but they have done a very poor job of that.

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In effect, what the Liberals are saying is that they made a mistake and what they meant by their opposition day motion was this. However, this is not the first time we have seen mistakes like this from the ranks of the official opposition. Time and time again in this session we have seen them trying to explain away embarrassing moments within their own party, particularly within their own leader's office.

I have heard the leader of the official opposition say that what he meant when he said that the Canadian flag looked like a cheap imitation of a beer label was really meant something else. I have heard the official opposition leader say that when he said the Liberals would have to raise taxes, what he really meant was this and he went on to try to make up for his gaffs and misspeaks and his obviously incapable leadership aspirations.

What we have seen is a pattern, particularly from the leader's office of the official opposition, but more important, a pattern from the entire Liberal Party of Canada of saying one thing and then having to explain what was said because it proved to be embarrassing. I can only suppose that if this conduct continues, we could quite conceivably see in any kind of election campaign, the Liberals putting things in their platform and afterwards saying that they kind of made a mistake there. They know they said this, but they meant to say something else.

God forbid the Liberals ever win an election. I can just imagine what their conversation with Canadians would be. They would say that they knew in their election campaign platform they said they would reduce taxes, but what they meant was they would increase the GST by two points and slap a carbon tax on everything. What they said in their election campaign platform was that they were tough on crime, but what they meant was not so much.

This is an embarrassment. Worse than that, it is an insult to members of this place. This motion, on the last opposition day of the session, is one that is not only redundant, but it is embarrassing to the sponsoring party and it is an insult to the members of the procedure and House affairs committee.

I sit on that committee and the discussion has been, quite frankly for the most part, very respectful. We have had some excellent testimony. We have had some eminent scholars and constitutional experts like Ned Franks, Benoit Pelletier, Peter Russell and others come and speak to us. I found much of the conversation fascinating.

I obviously have a difference of opinion from many of the other members of the opposition, but during all the discussion we have had, it has been respectful, detailed and, I believe we have collectively asked questions that were probing, timely and necessary. The information we are getting back is such that I would believe the substance of the report, when we finally deliver that report to Parliament, would be something for all committee members to be proud.

• (1130)

Yet, what do we have here? We have an opposition day motion that basically says that the Liberals do not care about the work we have done for the last two and a half or three months. The reason they give is because they do not think we have done anything that is basically relevant. They do not believe that the work that we have

done or the report that we will be submitting to Parliament is worth the paper it is going to be printed on.

The official opposition thinks that we need a special committee to study prorogation to the level of what has already been studied. I cannot for the life of me think what other witnesses this special committee could call that the procedure and House affairs committee has not already called. I cannot for the life of me think of what other areas that this special committee could delve into that the procedure and House affairs committee studying prorogation could not delve into itself.

This is nothing more than a shameless attempt to cover up a big mistake made by the official opposition. Those members are embarrassed. They were caught in a web of their own incompetence and now they are trying to convince members of this place that it was all part of a plan, that they really wanted to put this opposition day motion forward and then amend it on site.

We all know how this works. The official opposition knew at least a week ago that today was going to be its last opposition day. The official opposition did have a few potential motions for discussion on the order paper. If those members wanted to change it they had lots of time to amend or reword the current motion into a form that they agreed upon and wanted to present for discussion. They did not do so. Why? Because they were negligent. They were absolutely negligent in their duties.

I am sure it was a staffer who asked the House leader if he knew what the motion says. Then the Liberals realized they had to do something to try to get away from the obvious embarrassment they were going to face by debating a motion that is absolutely ridiculous.

The Liberals come here today and speak before Parliament, and try to convince members of this place that it was all part of their plan, it was all part of a motion that was going to come together and expand the terms of reference of their original motion.

I heartily concur with my colleague from Hamilton Centre when he said this is a joke. One would think that the official opposition that purports to be a government-in-waiting could make better use of its final opposition day of this session than this. Is there nothing else worthy of discussion on an opposition day?

Could the Liberals not talk about the G8 or G20? They seem to be fixated on that topic in question period. Could they not talk about pensions for Canadians? Discussions have been held between many members of this House about pensions and the need for pension reform. The Liberals did not want to talk about that. Instead, they come in with a motion that duplicates the efforts of a standing committee that is already studying the very issue that they put forward here today. It is absolutely ridiculous and it is a waste of the House's time.

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That is why every member of this place should be thoroughly and totally insulted by what is happening here today. There are other members of this place who are far more experienced than I and have more seniority than I. I would ask if any one of them could stand in this place and think of another example during an opposition day motion where this type of situation occurred, where a motion was brought forward to create a special parliamentary committee to conduct a study on an issue that was already being studied by a standing committee of Parliament. I defy anyone in this place to give me one example of this ever happening before in the history of Parliament. This is a major embarrassment for the Liberal Party. Those members are merely trying to put a good spin on it, but they are failing miserably.

I will only say this in conclusion. If this is the best that the official opposition can do on its final opposition day of this session, then those members are not fit to govern. If they cannot handle a simple task like bringing forward a relevant motion to discuss on their opposition day, then they are not fit to govern.

• (1135)

I think we have already seen evidence that they understand that themselves. The fact that their leader is openly musing about perhaps forming a coalition with the New Democratic Party is an admission of defeat in itself, and I think they have admitted to Canadians, and I think Canadians understand, that they cannot govern, so perhaps the only way that they might be able to form a government is with the assistance of the New Democratic Party.

I am not a big believer in polls, but I do believe that at certain times, in the snapshots of time that we all say polls are, that they are an accurate reflection of what Canadians are thinking. I noticed with great interest, over the course of the last six to eight months, that the approval rating of the Leader of the Opposition is close to single digits.

There is no wonder why members of his own party are openly musing about getting a new leader in before an election. There is no wonder when members of their party are talking about perhaps forming a coalition with other members of this place. There is no wonder that other members of their party are talking about a merger.

They have admitted in their words and, today, their actions that they are not fit to govern. They do not have the ability to govern. They should not be trusted with the reins of government.

I am absolutely offended as a member of the procedure and House affairs committee to be subjected to this type of motion, which is a direct slap in the face to myself, to my good friend and my colleague from Hamilton Centre, and every other member of the procedure and House affairs committee. This is a sham, this is an insult, and every Canadian should be aware of it.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I listen to the hon. member, I realize how scared the Conservative Party is, absolutely, totally scared.

It is scared of an election. Why are the Conservatives scared of an election? It is because they have created humongous boondoggles. Every minister has been found to be unaccountable. These new sheriffs in town talking about accountability are totally unaccountable.

The Minister of Industry, the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, and the Minister of Natural Resources who then had to be put down to another ministry, all of them are totally unaccountable. They do not think Parliament is supreme. The Prime Minister has absolute contempt for Parliament.

This is important. Every time somebody does not agree with the Conservatives, prorogation. It is important for Canadians to be aware that the government, that is so hypocritical, will stand up and say, "Well, guess what, we have such a good agenda" when only two bills have been passed. Where is the agenda? Where is the intelligence? Where is the thought process?

This is how intelligent it is. The government has wasted and blown \$13.2 billion and created a \$54 billion deficit. It is incompetent, unaccountable and undemocratic. I can now see why it is so scared of an election, and so scared of its own shadow.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I just want to quote a line that a political leader spoke not too many months ago.

The line was, and I know I cannot say indirectly what I can say directly, but I do want to make this quote, so forgive me if I name a member here. The quote was from a member who I am sure my colleague across the floor knows well. The quote was:

Mr. Harper, your time is up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. Questions and comments.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the word hypocritical over there a minute ago, and I said, "Oh my goodness".

I will pause for a second. I cannot believe that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons actually agreed with us. That is something for the books.

When members talk about hypocrisy here in this place, they talk about how the government has failed repeatedly and the abysmal record it has, but over 100 times that party either abstained or supported the government. Now they have this opportunity to bring something of substance forward in this place, and they are looking to form a committee when they have a committee already doing the work. It is ridiculous.

I will counter that with what the NDP chose to do with two of its opposition days. The first one was on the seniors charter, when we talked about their needs and a plan for their future. Last June, retirement security for seniors was the NDP opposition day motion. We did not go searching for other committees. I am just getting carried away here. It is so unbelievable.

I recall last year, on employment insurance, someone was talking about drawing a line in the sand. If he keeps drawing those lines, he will not have many toes left.

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● (1140)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, this is very scary because for the second time in less than half an hour I agree with the comments of another member of the NDP. Before I was cut off by the Chair, I did misuse language. I named a member. I was going to point out to my hon. colleague from the Liberal Party a quotation made by someone she is familiar with: “Mr. Prime Minister, your time is up”.

Of course, that was delivered a few months ago by the Leader of the Opposition. The context was that he was going to force an election. The member opposite said that the Conservatives are afraid of an election. It seems to me that it is that party that is somewhat fearful of going to the polls. It is no wonder, with a leader of a party that is almost in single digits, or perhaps at single digits.

However, that is not the point. An election will come whenever it is held, but what we are talking about here is an abuse of Parliament's time. We have an opposition day motion that should be discussing something that is at least relevant and new. Whatever the topic is, I do not really care. We have opposition days so that the opposition can pick a topic it wants to discuss, a topic that is important to its party and perhaps that it feels is important to Canadians.

However, the Liberals have brought a topic forward that is absolutely useless, redundant, insulting, and embarrassing for the last opposition day of a session, and then they are trying to justify it. I am not only offended but embarrassed to be sitting in a place where I have to put up with this kind of drivel. It is embarrassing.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader's speech outlined, passionately and on the mark, just how bad the Liberals have dropped the ball today. They could have brought in some very substantive motion today, talking about major policy issues, but I guess nothing came out of the thinkers conference they had this past winter. They have nothing to discuss and no policy propositions to bring forward on behalf of Canadians.

Instead, they are trying to diminish the work of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. It is embarrassing that they would use their last opposition day to deal with something that has already been dealt with. The work at committee has been substantive. The discussion has been good on this whole issue of prorogation.

There is one thing that the parliamentary secretary did not touch on. In this time of fiscal constraint, perhaps we should not be looking at adding more administrative burdens on the House. We have been talking about all of the expenses surrounding the operations of Parliament. The Liberals want to set up another special committee that would put a Liberal in the chair and have to pay out an additional salary for a chairmanship that would cost \$11,165. Is that appropriate use of parliamentary time, parliamentary resources and taxpayers' money?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned in my remarks a little while ago that the Liberal chair, because the Liberals are suggesting of course that the chair of the special committee be a Liberal member, would receive \$10,000 in additional salary for those duties. My hon. colleague is correct. The exact amount was \$11,165.

Beyond that, the special committee would incur additional costs for flying in, in some cases, or arranging for witnesses to come before the committee. These would be the same witnesses that the procedure and House affairs committee has already brought in for discussion and analysis.

It is not only an insult and inappropriate. It is an absolute, complete waste of taxpayers' dollars, all done for one reason: to try and mask the fact that this opposition day motion was a mistake. They dropped the ball. They did not realize what they had put on the order paper until it was too late. Everything we have heard today from the opposition party's benches is trying to justify and spin the fact that they dropped the ball big time.

● (1145)

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the member's lack of belief with respect to the strange coalition with the NDP. I am looking at the record with respect to the leader of the NDP and on numerous occasions he has said that the NDP would bring forward a similar resolution with respect to this issue of prorogation.

When a poll was taken after prorogation, 78% of Canadians said that the Prime Minister had abused his office with respect to the democratic principles of Parliament being supreme. Is the member holding in contempt 78% of Canadians who believe that this is the kind of resolution and the kind of direction that should come forward and that it is the responsibility of Parliament to bring that forward? Is he saying that it is the opposition now that is abusing that right?

I would suggest that it is the opposition motion that gives credibility to those Canadians who felt that the Prime Minister and the government were abusing parliamentary privilege when it prorogued. I think that is what Canadians are watching and I think they expected more than they got from that speech, I would suggest with great respect.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, the member for York South—Weston is, quite frankly, one of my favourite members in the House. He represents his constituents well and represents all Parliament well in his place.

However, with great respect, whether the member opposite feels that there was an abuse of the power of prorogation is irrelevant in this context because we are already conducting a study to determine that very thing. That was my point, that was the point from the member for Hamilton Centre and that was the point from every other member in this place.

It is an inappropriate, irrelevant, unnecessary motion to be brought forward here. All the Liberals are doing is trying to cover up their own incompetence.

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[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition day motion covers some things that are already being done. A legislative committee is working on the prorogation issue. Still, the main advantage of this motion is that it gives us the opportunity to discuss the December prorogation again. The government realized that that was a serious mistake, and it is trying to make us forget about it. As this session comes to a close, I believe it is not a bad idea to look at the Conservative government's overall behaviour by means of this motion, which I must say is not the most original motion I have ever heard.

That said, though, I do think the motion gives us a chance to take stock of the anti-democratic behaviour of the Conservative government and the Prime Minister. Of course, we will not vote for this motion if the amendment is not passed, because it would be pretty odd to vote to set up a special committee that would have to report next Wednesday. We reserve our decision on this. The motion is an opportunity to take stock of how this government has behaved in the House since 2006.

Things would have been different if last December had been the first time the government had used prorogation, a perfectly legitimate mechanism in the British parliamentary tradition whereby the Governor General is asked to prorogue the session. We would have understood if the government had asked for a prorogation for the first time because it had nearly completed its legislative agenda and the bills it had introduced over the months had been debated, amended, passed, defeated or what have you.

But December was the second time the government and the Prime Minister used prorogation to avoid answering the opposition's questions and facing up to their responsibilities. So we are completely within our right to criticize and challenge the government's actions, because the only purpose of last December's prorogation was to suppress allegations that Afghan detainees transferred by the Canadian Forces to the Afghan authorities were tortured. We all know about it now, so the government's tactic did not work. But the fact that it did not work is not why it was the wrong thing to do.

Earlier the parliamentary secretary talked about what a waste it would be to create a new committee. Was there any bigger waste this year, in 2010, than the month of parliamentary work the Conservatives made us lose? They supposedly tried to make up for lost time by getting rid of break weeks. That was the biggest waste there ever was.

The money spent on the G8 and the G20, the fake lake and the virtual decor is one thing but this is on an entirely different plane. We are talking here about a month of parliamentary work that could have prevented what happened yesterday when the government pulled out of its hat a bill that was introduced in mid-May. The government did not bring the bill back to the House until June 6 or 7 and told us, a few days before the end of the session, that the bill was absolutely necessary for preventing a notorious criminal, Ms. Homolka, from applying for a pardon.

Why did the government not wake up sooner? In part because we lost a month of parliamentary work as a result of this unnecessary prorogation. And then the government tried, as it has many times

before, to push through a bill that we are not prepared to accept without amendments. We voted to refer Bill C-23 to committee in order to study it seriously and to amend it. The government wanted to impose its agenda on us.

The Bloc Québécois stood firm. I am pleased to note that the other opposition parties did so as well. The Liberal Party in particular stood firm for once. We forced the government to accept a compromise that everyone could agree on. The bulk of Bill C-23 will be studied in committee and we will take the time to amend it in order to change what we dislike about it.

● (1150)

Our experience yesterday with the drama invented by the Minister of Public Safety and the Conservative government could have been avoided had we used the month of February to examine bills already introduced and if the government had better planned its work.

I will give an example. Why was it urgent to pass Bill C-2 on the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement? Was it really urgent that it pass? The government devoted all kinds of time, effort and resources to try to ram the bill down the throat of the NDP and the Bloc Québécois, even though our trade with Colombia is very limited. Furthermore, the human rights situation and democratic rights in Colombia are cause for a great deal of concern.

We could have used the parliamentary time to examine Bill C-23 earlier. However, the government decided otherwise. It is its right and responsibility, but it did not make responsible choices. This is all the result of the Prime Minister's decision of December 30, 2009 to prorogue the session until early March.

There is another negative aspect. Thirty-six bills died on the order paper, including 19 justice bills. That is an indication of the hypocrisy of the Conservative's rhetoric on justice. Once again, the government told us that it was proroguing to recalibrate its political and legislative agenda. Perhaps it understood that a number of its bills were not acceptable to Quebecers and many Canadians. It told us it was proroguing in order to come back refreshed in March.

So, what happened? Two days after the start of the session, the government proposed a budget that was completely unacceptable to Quebec. There was nothing in the budget to meet the needs of the regions or the forestry and aerospace sectors. Nor was there anything for the unemployed in Quebec or in Canada. The government spent one and a half months to present the same, unacceptable budget that it presented in spring 2009.

During that month, no work was done. I wonder what the Conservatives were doing. They probably travelled around handing out cheques. In Quebec, that has led to the Conservatives dropping below 16% in the polls. The fact remains that they acted under false pretences.

That was the latest prorogation. With the other one, just a few weeks after the election, a few days after Parliament returned in November 2008, the Minister of Finance presented an economic statement that was nothing more than an ideological statement. No concrete measures were announced to combat the looming financial and economic crisis. Instead, it was an attack on the opposition parties, and on women's rights in particular. This attack was totally unacceptable to the three opposition parties and to a good number, if not the majority, of Canadians. I can assure you that the majority of Quebecers were opposed to this dogmatic, ideological and provocative approach.

The government sparked a political crisis a few weeks after the October 2008 election. It should have realized that it was a minority government and that Canadians had given it a minority in the House, especially Quebecers, who sent a majority of Bloc Québécois members to represent them in Ottawa. The Prime Minister should have realized that a minority government has to work with the opposition parties.

That is not what he did. Instead, he sparked a political crisis and the opposition parties reacted by proposing an NDP-Liberal coalition, supported by the Bloc, on certain conditions that we announced and that were respected by the NDP-Liberal coalition at that time.

A confidence vote was scheduled, and instead of submitting to the decision of the House, the Prime Minister chose to pay another visit to the Governor General to request prorogation and avoid being held accountable. His request was granted, but only after two hours of discussions I must point out.

• (1155)

I suspect that her attitude and the fact that she had the nerve to question the Prime Minister cost Michaëlle Jean her job as Governor General. Of course, we do not know exactly what they talked about, but the conversation took long enough to suggest that she did not say yes right away, which is what often happens, and may have asked for an explanation. At any rate, the House was prorogued once again at the Prime Minister's request to avoid a confidence vote.

The very same thing happened during the September 2008 election. The government built up expectations. We have seen some of that during this session too, particularly in the spring when they paralyzed the committees. Mao Zedong gave us the *Little Red Book*, and then the Prime Minister gave us a blue book about how any good, self-respecting Conservative can sabotage a committee's work. The government created an artificial paralysis in the committees. The Prime Minister and his Conservative members and ministers, with their sorrowful and utterly false statements, have apparently tried to convince Canadians and Quebecers that opposition parties were to blame for this paralysis because they blocked committee work on legitimate government bills passed in the House.

After this buildup, the Prime Minister simply triggered an election in an attempt to not have to answer the opposition's questions on a number of issues and, in particular, to not have to respond to the allegations of torture in Afghanistan.

There again, this way of doing things seems fine according to British parliamentary tradition, but it is very questionable in terms of

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democratic legitimacy. Finally, the government is using all sort of tactics to not have to answer for its actions, to try and impose its backwards, conservative agenda on policy, economic, social and cultural fronts. And if that is not suitable, it provokes the opposition and tries, with measures that are, again, fully legal, to short-circuit the work of Parliament.

I think that it is important to use this opportunity provided to us by the Liberals to remind the public of that. At the same time, I must say that the Conservatives' provocative approach, which is extremely negative and undemocratic, has been encouraged by the Liberals' weakness because the government knew in advance that not all of the Liberal members would be in the House to vote against the budget implementation bill, Bill C-9. Again tonight, we will be voting on supply and it will be interesting to count the number of Liberal members in the House.

Benefiting from this weakness, the Conservatives try to impose their agenda on the opposition—on the Liberal Party in particular—and we have seen this throughout the session.

Another example of extremely questionable Conservative behaviour is the issue of the documents concerning allegations of torture in Afghanistan. A motion had to be passed in the House on December 10, ordering the government to produce a series of relevant documents that would reflect the work done by the Afghanistan committee concerning allegations of torture. The House adopted the motion by only a slight majority. A number of weeks after prorogation, we had to raise this issue and demand these documents again. Each time, the government tried to deflect the question by tabling highly censored documents that showed nothing that would lead us to believe that it was responding to the motion passed on December 10 requiring them to produce documents.

The fact that the requests for the production of documents do not die on the order paper following a prorogation, as government bills do, might come as a surprise for the Prime Minister and the Conservatives. Perhaps the Prime Minister had been misinformed and believed that by proroguing Parliament, the order to produce documents concerning allegations of torture in Afghanistan would disappear. That was not the case.

The opposition did not give up, and questions of privilege had to be raised so that the Speaker could intervene in the matter.

• (1200)

The Speaker's historic decision of April 27, 2010, was very clear: the documents must be handed over, while protecting all information related to national security, defence and international relations, and the opposition has always agreed with that. However, we had to pressure the government further to reach an agreement in principle. We also had to constantly brandish the sword of Damocles—contempt of Parliament—so as to obtain the compromises needed from the government in order to finally implement the mechanism. We only hope that it will be implemented quickly.

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This shows how we had to push the government to the wall in order to obtain results that, theoretically, should not have posed a problem, since there had been a democratic majority vote in the House. The government should have simply obeyed the order of the House, yet each time we had to use every means at our disposal to force the government to respect the democratic decision made in the House.

We are still in the same situation today. The House is about to rise for the summer break and we will be in exactly the same position when we come back around September 20.

The government has decided not to let political staff appear before committees anymore. The Prime Minister no longer allows his press secretary and director of communications, Dimitri Soudas, to appear before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. The committee therefore gave Mr. Soudas an ultimatum: he must appear. But he is hiding. There is bound to be a new children's game called *Where's Dimitri?* after *Where's Waldo?* The bailiffs tried to serve him with a subpoena, but he followed the Prime Minister to Europe to avoid it.

The Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics legitimately and legally said that Mr. Soudas had to be aware of the subpoena requiring him to testify before the committee, because the newspapers had written about it. But perhaps Dimitri does not read the papers, which would be an unusual thing for the press secretary and director of communications with the Prime Minister's Office. Dimitri Soudas is well aware he has to testify before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, and the deadline was yesterday.

Today, the committee is starting to write a report that will be tabled in the House. It may be tabled tomorrow, next week or when Parliament resumes. This report will serve as the basis for a new question of privilege and for making a case for contempt of Parliament.

We are leaving off at the same point as where we were at the beginning of this session. The atmosphere in Parliament is rotten, poisoned by the Conservatives' anti-democratic attitude, which has nearly reached the point of provocation a number of times.

Again, what happened yesterday was quite something. At the beginning of the day, the Minister of Public Safety, accompanied by the ineffable Senator Boisvenu, came to tell us that it was Bill C-23 or nothing. At noon, we were told it was Bill C-23 or nothing. Finally, they had to fold.

Instead of trying to get Bill C-23 passed with all its poison pills, it would have been much simpler for the government to tell the opposition parties that it wanted to prevent Ms. Homolka from being able to apply for a pardon, given that she was released from prison five years ago.

The government could have asked that, in light of the seriousness of the acts she committed, we amend the current pardon legislation—that is not actually the title—to change the period of time before an individual is eligible for a pardon to 10 years from the current five years. We would have been open to discussing that, but again, there was a pseudo political crisis provoked by the Conservatives.

I will close by saying that an anti-democratic attitude is poisoning the atmosphere. The government also has an anti-Quebec attitude that is supported more often than not by all Canadian parliamentarians and sometimes by MPs from Quebec in parties other than the Bloc.

I am thinking about the Canada-wide securities commission and Bill C-12 to reduce Quebec's political weight in the House, the GST and QST harmonization, where the government is not just dragging its feet, it has shut the door. I am thinking about the government's attitude with regard to climate change and culture, which is extremely important to Quebec's identity.

There are also the issues of equalization, employment insurance and the guaranteed income supplement. Not only is this government anti-democratic in the way it does things, but it is not meeting the needs of Quebec and the people.

• (1205)

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not necessarily sure about my hon. colleague's comment that other members of the House might not understand or respect Quebec in the way those members do. I lived in Montreal for five years, coming from Newfoundland and Labrador. I found Quebec to be absolutely stunning and its people and I never regret going there.

I will ask him a question about the level of brinkmanship in the House. Because we are in a minority situation, time and time again we find ourselves on a wedge issue where we pull ourselves to the extreme. The art of compromise is something that is a beautiful thing once it is attained. The problem with this House is we try to play to the polls to which we accede. I know other members of the House, including the Conservatives, brought up the polling figures.

In the examples he has given, when it comes to the pardon issue or the Afghan detainee issue, what would he provide as a solution for the House to avoid this brinkmanship? Could he couch his words around the idea of the prorogation as an example of how the power that vests in the government of the day to push us into a corner should not be within its power and that Parliament should be the supreme power in that nature?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I am pleased that he enjoyed his time in Montreal.

I agree completely with him on this point. If we want a minority government to work, the government in power—in this case the Conservative government—must recognize that it is in a minority position and must therefore work with the opposition. It must have the support of at least one of the opposition parties or, better yet, all these parties in order to pass its bills. In that context, I am convinced that this Parliament could be extremely productive.

I am thinking about the era of Liberal minority governments. With the support of the NDP, very interesting bills were introduced. When Mr. Pearson formed a minority government, Quebec made extraordinary gains. The Quebec pension plan and the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec were established. A minority government does not necessarily mean an ineffective or unproductive government. That is what happens when a minority government conducts itself as though it had a majority.

Unfortunately, we cannot count on the Conservatives to change their attitude. All too often they have made promises and not kept them. I remember that, after the October 2008 election, the Prime Minister said that he would tour Canada and Quebec to listen to the people and to recalibrate his way of doing things. They tabled the Minister of Finance's ideological statement around November 24, 2008, which, if my memory serves me well, caused the crisis we are familiar with.

Therefore, new structures and new rules must be put in place to force the government, especially a minority government, to respect the parliamentary rules. That also applies to a majority government. The rules under which the Prime Minister can ask for prorogation must be changed. The leader of the official opposition has made some suggestions. That could also have consequences.

I will close with an example. A government that asks for prorogation and obtains it without consulting the House could see its bills that died on the order paper blocked for two or three months before being reintroduced. There has to be a price to pay for such undemocratic actions.

• (1210)

[English]

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion.

Let me first make it crystal clear lest there be any doubt on anyone's part, that we on this side of the House, the NDP members, feel just as strongly as anybody about prorogation and the abuse of it by the current government. We are totally outraged.

There were demonstrations in my riding, downtown in Gore Park. People went out into the cold, frigid Canadian winter to protest their anger at the government's shutting down their Parliament. Every one of my colleagues attended rallies and committee meetings. They met with people and talked about this with local media. It was the main focus for weeks and weeks at the beginning of this year.

In fact, the NDP felt so strongly against what the government was doing in its abuse of prorogation that when we finally got back into this place, on March 17 the leader of the NDP, the member for Toronto—Danforth, placed a motion before the House, which was approved by this House, which states the following:

That, in the opinion of the House, the Prime Minister shall not advise the Governor General to prorogue any session of any Parliament for longer than seven calendar days without a specific resolution of this House of Commons to support such a prorogation.

I would note parenthetically that following that motion carrying in the House, the committee met a mere 10 days after the Liberals first tabled their original motion.

Business of Supply

That motion was debated in the House, passed, and went to the appropriate committee, that being the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. As the democratic reform critic, I substitute in whenever this comes up and the committee has been dealing with that since April 22, which is exactly what the motion before us says.

The opening words of the unamended motion, because it has to be amended to make it fit today, states:

That a special committee of the House be hereby established to undertake an immediate study of all relevant issues pertaining to prorogation, including the circumstances in which a request that Parliament be prorogued would be appropriate or inappropriate, and the nature of any rule changes (either by way of the Standing Orders or legislation or both) that may be necessary to avoid any future misuse of prorogation.

It goes on, but those are the basic instructions. The problem is that those basic instructions are exactly the mandate of the committee that is now seized of the motion that was passed by the House earlier, having been moved by the leader of my party, the member for Toronto—Danforth.

I am all for kicking the government every chance I get regarding prorogation, absolutely, let us go for it, but we did that writ large. Canadians did a pretty good job of making sure that prorogation is now as well known as any other political term might be in this country whereas before it was hardly known at all. There are a lot of Canadians who are still angry. That is why we have the committee.

I understand the official opposition wanted a vehicle to kick the government regarding prorogation. Fair enough, if that is the most burning issue, given the fact that the incident in question happened six months ago and a committee is already dealing with this issue, and I will get into the work it has already done in a moment, but if that is what the Liberals want to do, if they feel that is the burning issue, okay.

However, one really would think that with all the supports the official opposition has, it could have come up with something a little more imaginative. At the very least, it could have come up with something that does not so obviously duplicate something we have done in the past.

It really does look like the official opposition, after having made a big deal of wanting its opposition days, realized it had one on the last day and thought about what it would do. It panicked, grabbed it off the shelf, brushed off the dust, submitted it and said it will spend the afternoon kicking around prorogation. Since it is the last day of the House, nobody is paying attention anyway and it does not need to do too much with it.

• (1215)

That seems to be the approach the official opposition takes on opposition days. It was not that long ago the official opposition moved a motion and it failed, in part because it did not have all its members on side. It had not talked to its members to see how they would vote.

Business of Supply

This is one of the few opportunities where the opposition gets to control the floor of the House of Commons. Usually, under the normal rules, the government calls the shots. That is just the way the system works. We rarely get these opportunities. On the last opposition day we would have thought the official opposition would want to go out with a bang, or at least go out looking clever. Now it is not even going to go out looking competent.

I want to say a couple of words about the committee and then I want to speak very directly to the amendment because there are points to be made.

First, for anyone who is watching, the motion before us by the Liberals calls for a special committee to be struck and then it goes into great length about the details of who will be on it, who will chair it, all those details and so on.

The problem is that we already have a committee that is dealing with that issue and dealing with an NDP motion that passed the House. The committee started meeting on April 22. We have had 10 meetings. We have met for 15 committee hours. We have heard from 16 presenters. So 10 meetings, 15 hours, 16 presenters, and what? Do we throw that away? Will we just say it does not matter, throw that away and call it a practice run?

The Liberal House leader during one of his famous Regina monologues went on to tell us all about how the amendments make everything wonderful. Do not worry. The original motion was kind of stale-dated but the amendments today fix that and make everything relevant. So the Liberals are exactly where they need to be.

Let us have a look at some of these amendments:

that the special committee also take into account any report on prorogation that may be forthcoming from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, and provide an analysis of the consequences of the use of prorogation as a device to avoid accountability or to silence voices that may wish to express disagreement with the government;

That is what the committee is doing. The committee is going to be holding hearings. We have heard from 16 experts, some of the leading constitutional lawyers, professors and political scientists in the country, people who are designated as advisers to the Governor General on constitutional matters.

Our plan is at the end of that, we will start writing a report. Will we agree on the report? I doubt it. Is it going to be fascinating to see where we end up? Yes. Is it loaded with all kinds of partisan politics? Yes. Is it important and affects the future of how we operate this place? Yes again.

The amendment does not add anything new. It just duplicates what we have already done. It makes it sound as though there is a process that the Liberals have really thought through.

It drives us crazy when the Liberals will not admit when they have screwed up. They have to dig themselves further and further into a hole. They leave the impression that the committee can do its work and then they will take the report, and will do what? Real committee work? Will they somehow do the finished product? It does not make any sense at all. One need not to have been here for too many years or to know much about politics to figure out that it does not make a

whole lot of sense to start up a special committee to do work that is already being done by a committee.

These amendments are an attempt to make the official opposition look fresh and to make it look relevant and it is not.

• (1220)

A colleague from another party mentioned something interesting to me so I do not take ownership of this, but on that side of the House there is a fake lake, and on this side of the House there is a fake motion. Really, what we are dealing with here is a fake motion that does not mean anything.

If the Liberal members want to rant against the government regarding prorogation, okay. If that is their political priority, I do not quite get it, but that is fine. They have that right. But why not do something imaginative, come up with something relevant, something that furthers the issue?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Something real.

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, my colleague said, “something real”.

I do not agree with the government on too much with regard to prorogation. However, on the specific narrow issue of whether or not this is a redundant, ridiculous, unnecessary motion, I agree wholeheartedly. It is a shame that the official opposition gives us this motion as its homework. Any teachers in the room I suspect would be giving the official opposition an F.

Let us go back to the amendments that are supposed to make this motion relevant and make it all fresh and okay and actually mean something, “that the committee consist of”, and there are the details of what the new super spiffy committee would look like. The Liberals have outlined who would be on it.

It goes on, “that the committee have all of the powers of a Standing Committee as provided in the Standing Orders”. That is a great idea. It really is. If we are going to look at something this serious, we want to make sure that we have all the powers of a standing committee to do the job properly. Therefore, the House, in its wisdom, sent this motion to, oh, yes, a standing committee. Come on, how lame.

Let us go on to the spiffiness, “that the members to serve on the said committee be appointed by the Whip of each party depositing with the Clerk of the House a list of his or her party's members of the committee no later than June 23, 2010”. That is really important.

It goes on, “that membership substitutions be permitted to be made from time to time, if required, in the manner provided for in Standing Order 114(2)”. That would be kind of like what we can do in standing committees. We want to ensure the special committee has all the powers of a standing committee because the current standing committee does not have, well, see what happens when we try to do Liberal think? It does not work. It does not take us anywhere.

Here is the best. This is my favourite, by far. This is the one I love. It is the last amendment, the spiffying-up amendment, “by deleting the words ‘June 23, 2010’ and substituting the following: ‘November 2, 2010’.”. Why is that there? If the Liberals had not put that in there, this new spiffy special committee would have to report in six days.

Business of Supply

Granted, it made a whole lot of sense back in April when the Liberals originally tabled the motion. However, the fact that this special committee would be due to report in six days and they have had to amend the reporting date really underscores just how laughable and sad state of affairs the official opposition has presented itself today.

Again, I appreciated the remarks of the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader who sits on the committee as a regular member, as do some other members who are here today. I thought the Liberals would have a good point if it ever came out that the committee was not working right. That would be the best argument they would have, if the committee were log-jammed and we were into political partisan fighting, as is occurring in some of the other committees. I thought, boy, if that came out they might have a bit of an argument. The problem is it is not true.

The committee is working fine. It really is. We have not gotten into the deliberations of what we want to do about changes. That is where the real sparks are going to fly, and that will happen in due course, just like we do with everything else around here.

• (1225)

However, the committee members right now are respectful, as my colleague the parliamentary secretary said. At this stage, we are trying to learn. Most of us here, while we are privileged and honoured to cast the votes that decide the laws of Canada, are not all constitutional experts and that is good. We need constitutional experts but we also need people who take that expertise and apply it to law-making in a way that benefits the majority of people. That is where elected representatives come into it. We are the interface between the people in our ridings and this place. However, the member would have us start that all over again.

We have 16 of the smartest, most patriotic, probably high priced, constitutional advisers in the entire country and the debates in question are not acrimonious. We are legitimately trying to get up to speed, members from all three caucuses. We listen, we ask questions, we read and assimilate the information and we bring in the next presenters. We pose questions to them based on some of the arguments of others, because they do not always agree, which is what makes it so fascinating.

My point is the committee is doing exactly what it should do. When some questions come out, the government looks better or worse depending on the issue, but we are not doing like I am doing now, into full flight debate and going at each other. That is not going on.

The official opposition cannot even say the committee is not working right and therefore we need this other committee. There are three relevant points of the debate today. First is the government's abuse of prorogation has to stop. Second, the House has already been seized with the issue and passed a motion by the member for Toronto—Danforth expressing one formula. That was sent to the committee and the committee is now having its deliberations. Third, this is an absolute waste of an official opposition day, period, let alone the official opposition bringing in a motion that calls for a committee to deliver a report due in six days from the day we debate it.

Some might say if it were the Bloc and the NDP, they do not have the same resources, what they do is not as important as the official opposition and that is the reality of this place. However, that is not the case. The Liberals purport to be a government in waiting. We keep waiting to see where the government is going to be. It sure is not in this motion and it is not around whatever little thinking went into it. I guess that is really the point. There does not seem to have been any thought. It is as if we are getting toward the end of the game and we can just slack off. It looks like slacking off, like it is the last day, it does not matter so why do we not put that forward and debate it for awhile?

Mr. Scott Simms: It's like dinner theatre.

At least dinner theatre is entertaining unlike the motion which is not even that. It is just a plain waste of time, a waste of this place to talk about a motion to create a committee when we already have the committee doing the work. If Liberals wanted to advance the issue of prorogation and have a legitimate reason to speak, then that is fine. I would question their priorities at this point, but do something creative. Bring in something that actually advances the cause rather than just being so flippant about it. They just take any old motion and not to worry. We will rant away the last day. It all seems like it is more important to think about getting out of here than the business at hand. It is still important just because it is the last day. Therefore, the official opposition undermines the importance of going after the government for its abuse of prorogation by bringing in something that is so flimsy.

• (1230)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the work that has already been done in the standing committee. Would my colleague talk about having an additional committee doing the same thing? What kind of resources does that take and what kind of staffing does it need? During these times, when we are trying to be very respectful of taxpayer dollars, could the member talk about what the impact of this committee might be?

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, there is definitely a cost and if we are duplicating work, it is a waste. When special committees need to be struck, the money is not really the issue. If it is important work that needs to be done. That is why there are budgets to do the work. I think the member's point is very well taken. In this case, it is a waste.

As I read this and, like the hon. member, I was struggling to figure out what the thinking was. If I follow this correctly, we are supposed to finish our work at the committee and then after that this new committee gets struck. It takes our work and then I am not sure what it does. Our work is meant to finalize the issue and make recommendations back to the House.

I am not sure what the committee would do. In that regard, it is a total waste of money and time. It is also a waste of intellectual opportunity to bring in something like this today. I agree with the member. It is waste all around.

Business of Supply

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the period the member for Hamilton Centre referred to, I remember I went to a rally in Toronto, downtown at Yonge and Dundas. I really wanted to participate, not as a Liberal, a Conservative or New Democrat, but as a Canadian taxpayer and express my frustration. I was disappointed.

I was pleased with the people who showed up, young, old and everybody in between. However, as the rally moved on, it was hijacked by the NDP. It was not a Canadian rally. It was an NDP rally. I left because it was not a true expression of all Canadians, but more so politically motivated.

I do not know why the member is upset with the motion. We are trying to enhance what those members are supposedly concerned about, and that is how we address prorogation. The NDP members cannot speak and chew at the same time. They have to get their story straight. We are co-operating to pass the free trade agreement with Colombia. They do not agree. We have co-operated to pass crime legislation. They do not agree. They do not agree on anything. No wonder Canadians do not support them.

• (1235)

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that detailed, succinct analysis of what is going on here today. I can appreciate the fact that the member is upset. Those members were hijacked. They are the second party. They are the official opposition. It was the fourth party, the NDP, that had its motion passed through the House. That is what they are upset about. They are trying to regain a little ground.

The hon. member used the word “enhance”. I dissected the Liberals’ amendment and motion line by line and I defy the official opposition to stand and show me or anyone else where their motion is an enhancement as opposed to a duplication of the work that is being done.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have no words to express the appreciation I have for the NDP member and his idea of a “fake motion”, which is so appropriate. I would like to hear his comments on the fact that the motion was amended, and that the last amendment talks about November 1. Is that not the day after Halloween? Does that inspire him?

[English]

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, the member probably found the only way we could have managed to get the word “inspire” into this debate. I congratulate him on that.

Again, it is the date. If I can pick up on the hon. member’s comments, I believe the new date in the amendment is November 2. However, it is unlikely that our committee will be done its work. If we follow this nonsensical thinking, it would suggest that once we are done our work, then this new committee would pick up and go from there. It would be responsible for getting a report back to us by November 2 of this year.

We are not going to be done by then. If we were, it would only be by a matter of weeks. It would be virtually impossible for that deadline to be met. Not only do the Liberals’ have a stale-dated delivery date in the original motion, but their spiffy, spanking new

shiny amendment, which is meant to fix everything, still does not fix it.

It reminds me of Mike Harris when he brought in a planning act and it took seven further bills to amend each of the mistakes he made in the preceding one. That is what I am seeing here, with these kinds of dates moving around. They still have not been thought through.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think people watching today would probably like to get an update as to what is happening with the committee. I was interested to know when it would report, but the member has just indicated it probably would not be until November. People may be asking if it will be reporting before a possible fall election. That is an important thing to consider as well.

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, although my colleague has not been in this place a long time, he served in the Manitoba legislature for the better part of 25, 30 years. It is like when we refer to rank, we always give people a higher one, never a low one. If we are not sure what their rank is, they are a general. The hon. member was there for 30 years until I hear different.

The fact remains that he understands how the process works. We do not know exactly when we will report. I only said that I doubted we would be finished until November and if we were, it would only have been by a few weeks. Whether it would come before or after an election, I do not know. The parliamentary secretary made reference to the respect in the way the committee was working. No one is playing any games. We do not know when the election is coming. At this point, no one is saying let us get it done sooner or later to shaft this party or that party. None of that is going on. At this point, all we are doing is hearing from experts. We are getting close to finishing that. It is the first stage of our work. When that is done, we will begin to deliberate.

The hon. member will know that once we are into deliberations, there is no way to know how long. It is like a jury. We could wrap it up in one day or it could take a year. There could be majority reports, minority reports. All I know, in my opinion as the member on the committee for our party, is the committee is doing the work that is necessary. It will deliver a report and the rest of this is just nonsense.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Hamilton Centre has spoken quite articulately about the lack of substance and about the shortcomings of the motion. The hon. member was quite outraged by the House being prorogued at the end of last year, as I and many Canadians were.

Could my hon. colleague talk about other issues that could help the official opposition, that could have been talked about? My riding of New Westminster—Coquitlam and Port Moody is facing many issues, such as jobs, the economy, pensions, the environment, climate change, affordable housing or transit. The list is long. Could he comment on that, perhaps focusing on any real and substantive issues that are not already being dealt with? As he has already outlined, there is a committee to deal with this.

Business of Supply

• (1240)

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. We could pick any number of issues, as my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek did. We could pick an issue that matters to any of our constituents and put together an opposition day motion. It does not take that long if we have to do it at the last minute. It is easy to find issues that are important and bring them forward. However, to do this is what is so insulting.

We have an opportunity. Prorogation and the abuse of it is really important, but as my colleague said, so is health care, so is the environment, so are jobs. Those are things that are not being dealt with in a way that is acceptable right now.

The prorogation issue is in committee. We will have the fights. It is being dealt with in the way it would. Why are we not dealing with are matters with which we have not dealt yet? There is enough of those issues around.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

This parliamentary session is starting to wind down. It may even be over by tonight. It has been quite fractious and contentious and, I would submit, little was accomplished with the exception of a raft of micro-mini criminal bills, many of which had already been introduced in previous sessions of Parliament or previous Parliaments themselves.

This session was delayed by six weeks because of the Prime Minister's penchant for prorogation. Whenever the Prime Minister perceives that he is under a political threat he cancels Parliament. If it were up to the Prime Minister, Parliament would be limited to merely a throne speech declaration and budget rubber-stamping. Everything else would go by fiat. In fact, some might say that it already does.

The parliamentary Westminster system gives a prime minister enormous power, power to select the executive, power to appoint the judiciary, power to appoint half of the legislature, power to keep his or her caucus in fear and trembling, plus literally thousands of other order in council appointments and a whole array of quasi-judicial bodies. However, that is not enough for our Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister's repetitive resort to the use of prorogation got Canadians very upset. It was a gross political miscalculation and Canadians let him know, in no uncertain terms, that they expect their democracy to function here in this chamber and have their MPs heard on the issues of the day. However, the people they elected to represent them were muzzled, shut up and sidelined by the unilateral actions and the high-handedness of the Prime Minister.

Canadians were so outraged that they held huge rallies on the Hill and elsewhere and started a Facebook site that instantly grew to over 200,000 users. Emails and letters were flying back and forth between MPs' offices and outraged citizens, and government MPs were accosted on a regular basis for their participation in shutting down Parliament.

What is it that motivates the Prime Minister to shut down Parliament twice in 12 months? I submit that the present Prime

Minister in particular, and like no other, cannot stand dissent or disagreement no matter how respectful. He is a command and control Prime Minister like no other. He brooks no backtalk from anyone, let alone those pesky, no nothing MPs who ask rude and impertinent questions. Those who demand transparency and accountability get nothing but stonewalling.

It was nothing less than an historic ruling by you, Mr. Speaker, that reminded the Prime Minister that Parliament was supreme and that the government must bow to the will of Parliament.

I would submit that there is a pattern here. It is not just the all too frequent resort to prorogation and it is not just the powerful ruling of you, Mr. Speaker. It is the systematic shutting down of voices of dissent.

In February we learned that KAIROS, after a 30 year funding relationship with the Government of Canada, was terminated, and this spread apart from all of the various parties, a Conservative government and Liberal governments. After 30 years of good work by some of the most dedicated and sincere people that one would ever want to meet, it was shut down.

KAIROS is made up of the Anglican Church, the Christian Reform, Presbyterians, Evangelical Lutherans, the United Church, Catholics, Quakers, Mennonites, pretty well the entire spectrum of the Christian community. However, it was not enough just to de-fund the KAIROS organization. The government said that it was a bunch of anti-Semites at the same time.

If the Prime Minister can shut down Parliament on a whim and defy the conventions of Parliament until a Speaker makes a historic ruling, shutting down Canada's Christian churches is a mere nothing. Thirty years of paid full service were dismissed with a phone call in the night. Why? It was because the organization dared speak truth to power. It is chill and kill any voice of dissent. This is some democracy.

• (1245)

However, KAIROS is neither the first nor the last. Rights & Democracy is an entity that was created by Parliament 22 years ago. It has developed an enviable international reputation. Here the pattern was to destabilize the board and, after a number of confrontations between the board and the staff, the staff signed a mass letter of protest against the board. Regardless of how it turns out and regardless of the findings of the committee of this House after its inquiry, its reputation will have to be rebuilt. At this point, its reputation is destroyed and it has lost its hard-won international credibility. By the way, they are also a bunch of anti-Semites.

Do we see a pattern here? Shut down Parliament, have the Speaker force a ruling, dismiss Canada's churches and shut down Rights & Democracy, a well-respected international organization, by destabilization.

Business of Supply

My colleagues, the member for York Centre and the member for Winnipeg South Centre, hosted a meeting last Monday here on Parliament Hill. Seventeen organizations that have been de-funded or are on their way to being de-funded came to Parliament Hill to tell their story. They included the Assembly of First Nations, Council for International Co-operation, the Canadian Council on Learning, the Canadian Council on Social Development, Oxfam and a whole host of others that came to tell their story.

What was interesting when I listened to their stories was that they did not realize that all of the others were being de-funded at the same time and that there was a pattern here, which was that any voice that disagrees with the government, no matter how muted or how respectful, gets shut down. It was sorry but after 5, 10, 15 or 20 years of a relationship where they spoke into the marketplace of ideas, it no longer wished to hear from them.

Each group had its story and each group was either chilled and stilled or on its way to being chilled and stilled. Even those that do not receive funding from the government or whose funding is still secure were shocked by the extensive and pervasive pattern of the government to shut down the voices of dissent. Democracy suffers when those who have a different view are prevented from speaking.

A friend sent me a note and expressed himself far more eloquently than can I. He said, "Canadians value greatly our open and democratic society, believe in the importance of human rights, including the right to free expression and the value of ensuring a diversity of views and perspectives in public debate. The government should act on its responsibility to promote effective policy debate and to cease and desist its active attacks, threats and de-funding campaigns to silence critics in civil society or in the public service who are acting in good faith, consistent with their mandates to create a healthy democracy and protect human rights."

It gets worse. The Canadian Council for International Co-operation represents over 100 NGOs. It is possibly the most respected research and advocacy organization in Canada. It, too, is awaiting the dreaded midnight phone call. After 42 years of human rights work, it will be down the drain. If the government can shut down Parliament, KAIROS, CCIC and Rights & Democracy are mere nothings.

I will end by quoting Martin Niemöller who famously said:

...they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. ... Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.

Chill, kill and still is the pattern of the government. We are going backwards in this democracy. This past six months is a backward step for the freedom to speak in our democracy and to talk and have our voice heard. This is a pattern and it is a regrettable pattern that must stop.

• (1250)

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I serve with the member on the finance committee and I have a great deal of respect for him but I am absolutely astounded by some of his remarks here today.

The fact is that he was here in the House, as I was, when Parliament was prorogued in the past by the Liberal government when there was a full slate of bills on the order paper. When Prime Minister Chrétien prorogued twice when I was in opposition, I did not hear any complaints from the member at that time.

In terms of dissent, it is interesting that the member equates not funding an organization with not allowing that organization to speak. An organization has every right to speak and every right to raise funds, as groups, such as Results Canada, do, which I know that he and I both respect.

With respect to funding, though, the member is constantly telling me how we should be spending less as a government. If he does not think that cuts to those certain groups should have been made, I would like the member to stand in his place and state explicitly where he or the Liberal Party believes this government should actually cut funding instead of the funding to the groups that he has outlined.

I would also like the member to address the issue of dissent. This Prime Minister, as a member of a centre right government, actually appointed to our most important foreign post perhaps the most successful centre left politician in this country at the provincial level, Gary Doer, to represent us in Washington. If that is not an example of a Prime Minister reaching across the ideological aisle to ensure that we are well represented as Canadians, I do not know what is.

I would like the member to comment on those things and perhaps retract some of those outlandish statements he made in his speech here today.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member said, I do serve on the finance committee with him and I do respect his work. It is one of the functioning committees, which I guess speaks to the point, because for the last six months the government has adopted a slash and burn attitude toward a lot of the committees and made them dysfunctional. That, too, is part of shutting down the voices.

The hon. member and I have a great deal of time and respect for the Parliamentary Budget Officer but he has come before our committee and has said that he was not getting any co-operation from the government and therefore could not offer impartial and accurate advice to our committee.

In terms of shutting down voices, there is Linda Keen of the Canada Nuclear Safety Commission; Adrian Measner of the Canadian Wheat Board; Yves Le Bouthillier, president of the Law Commission of Canada; Andrew Okulitch of Geological Survey of Canada; and Allan Amey, president of the Climate Fund Agency on Canada emissions reductions. I could go on with quite a list of people, all of whom have been silenced by the government. It is a chill on dissent in this country.

• (1255)

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member mentioned the Parliamentary Budget Officer. If the member will check the record of the finance committee, he will see that no one has appeared before our committee more often, certainly since I have been on that committee in the last two years, than that very Parliamentary Budget Officer.

In fact, in the last supplementary estimates the member will know that the funding was increased for the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The member will also know that reporting is all done online. Canadians, parliamentarians or whoever can fact-check that out for themselves.

In fact, voices that have at times been critical of this government and appointments that have been made by this government are very welcome to come to committee. There has never been a refusal by any Conservative member on the finance committee whenever a request from the opposition was made for the Parliamentary Budget Officer to come forward.

The image that the member is portraying is so fundamentally wrong. What I like to tell Canadians back home, and I like to use hockey analogies, is that the reality is that as a minority government we are basically short-handed for 60 minutes and every once in a while we like to get a breakaway and hopefully score a goal.

The reality is that it is hard to get anything done in committee because, as the member knows, the opposition always outweighs the government on any single vote. We have to cross the aisle to get anything done—

The Deputy Speaker: I will have to stop the member there because there are only 30 seconds left to respond.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has been invited to the committee and has come freely many times. However, during each occasion that he has come to the committee he has said that he was not getting co-operation from the Department of Finance and the Government of Canada and that, therefore, he was limited in the report he could make to our committee and therefore to this Parliament. That is the point that the Parliamentary Budget Officer continues to make.

I do not quite understand why that is not one of the more fundamental ways in which the alternative voice to the government—

The Deputy Speaker: I will have to stop the member there.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am inspired to stand to debate and discuss the issue of prorogation itself, because I am concerned about the execution of it in the past and am deeply worried about how Parliament should behave.

As a parliamentarian, I think I should defend the supremacy of Parliament. It is my responsibility to defend the institution. We bring laws in here. We certainly feel that given the supremacy of Parliament, it is a place where we should all behave. That way, any divisive issue, any issue that is used as a wedge to gain better poll positions or political points, should not be used through this particular procedure.

Prorogation has certainly become a hot issue over the past two years. The first time it happened, it seemed to slip under the radar somewhat. The second time it occurred, the Conservatives thought the execution of it was so silky smooth that they were going to get

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away with it and that the general public would actually forget over time.

However, we found ourselves in a grassroots campaign, compliments, for the most part, of social networking on the Internet, which brought this issue to the fore. We finally felt that the government recognized that the people of this country recognize the importance of their democratic institutions, primarily of course, in this particular situation of prorogation.

I am glad that this motion is in the House today and that we are going through this procedure.

In the meantime, we find ourselves at least trying to defend the institutions of Parliament, to the point where sometimes we get bogged down in the minutiae of day-to-day mudslinging, certainly when it comes to question period. I hope that the decorum will come back to the House so that we can show people that we are making a concerted effort to make this a truly democratic institution. My goodness, if we tried that, we would be heroes all.

I want to point out some of the comments that have been made about the latest round of prorogation. I do not even have to explain it any more, because now everybody knows what prorogation is. Unfortunately, people know about prorogation because of the way we have been abusing it. That, in and of itself, is certainly sad when it comes to the House of Commons, which we hold in such high esteem.

Nelson Wiseman is an esteemed professor whose opinions we rely on quite a bit around here. In an article, he writes:

Responding to public revulsion, the director of communications for the Minister of Finance rhetorically asked in *The Hill Times*, “where was the outrage toward the previous 104 instances”?

He went on to state:

The answer is simple: no prime minister has so abused the power to prorogue. Harper’s former chief of staff Tom Flanagan understood the obvious: the purpose of prorogation —

• (1300)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The hon. member cannot name members of the chamber, even when quoting.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, excuse me. It is late in the season, and I get a little carried away when it comes to defending the House of Commons.

Anyway, I see that I have created quite a bit of excitement across the way. I would like to point out something else to them.

Speaking about this particular situation, another certain professor, Andrew Heard, had these points about prorogation itself and about how we must be careful that we do not abuse the system. He said:

There is little guidance to be had from historic precedent as no Prime Minister in Canada has asked for prorogation in the face of an almost certain defeat on a confidence vote. Prorogation is normally granted after many months of parliamentary business have elapsed....In 1988, Parliament was prorogued after only 11 sitting days....Prorogation came after only fourteen calendar days and twelve sitting days in the first session after the 1930 federal election. In both 1988 and 1930, however, the government had a solid majority in the House of Commons, and there was no question that prorogation would permit the government to avoid defeat.

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Basically, what he is saying is that the precedents that some people cite, and what happened before and quickly thereafter, were not questions of government survival, because the majority was in place. That was not the case this time.

Now we find ourselves in a situation in which we could be abusing the system only for the sake of political survival. In this last particular situation, it was certainly perverse in the way it was used, because the government wanted to avoid one small particular issue: Afghan detainees.

I would caution everyone in the House not to use the methods within the House to defeat the purposes of the supremacy of Parliament. I remember that just a short time ago we brought in a motion to say that we did not agree with reforms to NAFO, the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization. There was a vote in the House that said that we did not agree with what they were doing in NAFO. We did not agree with the agreement that was struck in Europe, with many other countries, regarding the health of fish stocks off our coast, particularly the east coast.

The vote said that we did not agree with it, yet the very next day, the government ratified the agreement, defying the opinion of the House.

We might cite precedents showing when that has happened before. However, let us go back just a few more years and talk about 2006. I say this with the utmost respect. Let us talk about the document called "Stand Up for Canada".

As a man who is 5 feet 4 inches tall, I certainly appreciate the respect I can get when I stand up in the House. When the government stands up and says that it will bring every international agreement within the confines of the House to debate and vote on, it tells us that the government must respect Parliament. At least, that was the intention.

The government did not even bring that agreement to the House. We had to bring this particular agreement to the House to debate. We voted. We did not like it. The next day, in defiance of that opinion, it was signed, or ratified, which is the term used.

Bradley Miller, assistant professor, University of Western Ontario, made a good point about prorogation. He said:

Prorogation is a regular event in the parliamentary cycle, but until this occasion had always come at the end of a legislative session—that is, when the government decided that its legislative agenda was complete. There is no Canadian precedent establishing that the Governor General has the power to refuse to grant prorogation in these circumstances....It is, however, arguable that the power to refuse dissolution ought to extend to the power to refuse prorogation....It is argued that one of the rationales for the power to refuse to grant a dissolution—to provide that check on the [government]....

That applies in this particular situation. I would say, according to his words, that the Governor General has to take a greater role in the future so that dissolution, or in this case, prorogation, is not abused by the levers of government, because that power is vested within the Crown. Therefore, we must seriously consider that.

Eric Adams is another highly esteemed professor. He said:

The specific power to prorogue Parliament is unmentioned in the Constitution, but it was well understood by the framers to fall within the prerogative of the Crown.

I just mentioned that idea.

Blackstone stated and explained:

A prorogation is the continuance of the parliament from one session to another, as an adjournment is the continuation of the session from day to day.

That is a good point, because we do not stand here and try to interrupt the daily session just because it is not going well. There are times when we are just not performing up to par. I use that term rather lightly, as the House can well understand.

● (1305)

We do not use that power to shut down for a particular day, so why should we shut this down for a particular session? They talked about the fact that we were holding up legislation, yet at the very same time, the government prorogued Parliament, killing 37 bills, the vast majority of which were promises it made in successive campaigns. The government thought that the execution was so silky smooth that it was actually going to work.

The grassroots then decided that they did not think so.

I agree that this committee should be struck. I agree that we should expedite the process by which we get to the bottom of prorogation and deal with it using the recommendations we bring.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member a few questions. If the actions of the Prime Minister and this government were as egregious to him as he outlined, why did his party not stand fully and squarely opposed to us in terms of our throne speech and our budget this year?

He talked about the Afghanistan issue. Liberals said during the months of January and February that the Afghanistan committee would not reconvene. Can he explain why it was reconvened? In fact, it was the first committee to reconvene after Parliament returned in March. Can he explain why that happened?

If the Liberal Party believes that this minority government is so egregious, why has it continued to allow this government to operate? Perhaps he can explain the situation with respect to the refugee reform bill. Our minister and our government thought that we had the support of the Liberals on that after accepting 80% of their amendments. Instead, they changed their position, so we in fact worked with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP. We appreciate their support for that bill.

Can he address all of those issues for me here this afternoon?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member checks the record with regard to those issues, he will see that I did vote against it at that time, and with great conviction.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to follow up on the government member's question, if the Liberal members disagree with the government's programs so much, why do they continue to keep them in power by holding enough of their members out in terms of these crucial budget votes? Why have they essentially voted with the Conservatives almost 100 times already?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I just mentioned that I did not vote for them. There was a speech made earlier by one of the member's colleagues. He talked about fake lakes and fake motions. I would add a third: fake indignation. That is exactly the word we are looking for.

Let us cast our memories back to last fall for just one moment. We put a motion in the House. We expressed consent. We asked for consent from the House. We just did not like the way the government direction was going. We asked them to show no faith in this particular government. We asked them to show no confidence in the government, and therefore, the vote was had.

They, of course, supported themselves. We decided that we had no confidence in the government. The Bloc decided that they too had no confidence in the government. Here is the best part. Here is the punchline. At the very end, when the vote was for no confidence, this proverbial tumbleweed ran right through the House of Commons. We were waiting. The new expression became, "There is an APB on the NDP."

For goodness' sake, where did they go? We looked. We cast across the way, and all of a sudden we could not find them. All of a sudden, the strength and backbone with which they stood against the government collapsed. An entire team of paleontologists stood outside this room looking for this particular species that lost its backbone so quickly they created a whole new class of invertebrates. It was unbelievable. It happened right before our eyes.

There is a fake lake. Maybe this is a fake motion. I do not think so, but there is the fake indignation we always get, and it is about time they were called on it.

• (1310)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I first saw this motion, I thought maybe there had been a huge mistake. It is asking for a special committee of the House to be established to undertake an immediate study of all relevant issues pertaining to prorogation. The procedure and House affairs committee has been studying this for the last number of weeks, if not months.

The colleague's own members, including the deputy whip, the whip, and the deputy House leader, are all on that committee. They ask for a report by June 23. How seriously should we be taking this motion when it contains those kinds of blatant errors?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague may want to check up on the latest amendment because we are talking about November now. However, what bothers me in this House is that for the sake of, I mentioned faked indignation, my goodness, but let us talk about the fact that we should be raising the bar here. This situation requires the expediency of the process and therefore what the motion does is it allows us to get to this faster. We get to the bottom of it. This issue of prorogation is one that is sincere. I am sure members know what I am talking about.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before turning to the remarks I have prepared, I have to offer a brief editorial comment on what just transpired. The novelty of watching a Liberal member attack the New Democrats for lack of backbone given, in this Parliament, the voting records of the two parties and the level of consistency, or indeed of ability to turn up for votes in the House.

The fact is that one of those parties has been consistent and one has been, put honestly, very hard to figure out exactly what it stands for. Anyone other than the member would have no trouble

distinguishing which of the two parties actually has had a backbone in this place.

I want to pick up where my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons left off. He had quite a bit of fun dealing with the fact that the motion proposed by the Liberals today is so obviously, indeed comically, redundant. I will not go through all the things he pointed to, but the motion, at least in its unamended form, calls for a deadline and report back to the House six days from now, deals with subject matter which is being looked at extensively by a sitting committee, and seems to have been put forward without any actual re-reading of its content and the datedness of its content by the Liberal House leader who put it forward.

I want to take some time today to talk about the rest of the Liberal motion because it is a very lengthy motion and contains in addition to a call for a new special committee reporting back on June 23 and then adjusted to November 2. It also calls for particular attention to be devoted to a proposal put forward several months ago by the Liberal leader. I will come back to that in a second.

Looking at that, the first thought that occurs to me is that when it comes to putting forward a motion on this subject and trying to claim leadership on the issue, a candid observer would say that the horse has really left the barn on this one.

The House did vote on March 17 on a motion put forward by the leader of the New Democratic Party, the member for Toronto—Danforth, on this very subject. I will read the wording of the motion:

That, in the opinion of the House, the Prime Minister shall not advise the Governor General to prorogue any session of any Parliament for longer than seven calendar days without a specific resolution of this House of Commons to support such a prorogation.

Just to be clear about this, I actually voted against the motion. The record will reflect that. However, it actually passed 139 to 135 votes and that includes a good number of Liberals. So I am a bit at a loss as to why, having dealt with the subject matter in this way, a different and really, if we get into the meat of it, a contradictory motion would then come forward.

It is not just a motion about studying prorogation, it is studying it, and taking into account and giving a special privileged place to another motion which could have been brought forward by the Liberals, but they chose not to bring forward. That is a vexed question.

It does point out something interesting. On the first available opportunity to deal with this issue, the New Democrats on their very first opposition day brought it forward. The Liberals, on their very last opposition day, are bringing it forward and one cannot help but think they just did not have anything else in their quiver they could haul out and in an act of desperation or absent-mindedness, they reached in and pulled this out, and produced it to deal with an issue which at the very least would not involve them taking a position on anything new. I think that is a fair comment, although it may seem a little tough.

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There is a second problem, which is the presupposition that the Liberal leader's proposal is one that ought to be privileged, put ahead of others. Remember this is a series of proposals that he developed prior to the hearings that have taken place in the procedure and House affairs committee. We ought now to take this and essentially take his proposals and use them to supercede all the information that has been gathered by all the parties.

● (1315)

I might just take a moment to read what is the meat of this motion. Again, a special committee is called for to engage in a study, and then:

—that, as a part of this study, the committee take into account the specific proposals for new rules pertaining to prorogation offered by the Leader of the Opposition, including: (a) a requirement that the Prime Minister give Parliament written notice in advance of any request to prorogue, together with his/her reasons therefore; (b) a requirement that there be a debate in the House of Commons after any such notice is given, but before any request for prorogation is made; (c) a requirement that the express consent of the House of Commons be obtained at the conclusion of any such debate if (i) fewer than 12 months have passed since the last Speech from the Throne, (ii) the requested prorogation is for a period of more than 30 days, or (iii) an issue of confidence is outstanding before the House; and (d) a provision that allows committees of Parliament to continue to function during any prorogation;—

So, that is the substance of it.

Two things strike me about this. First, we have been engaged in a lengthy study for several months now in the procedure and House affairs committee and, as the member for Hamilton Centre has observed, it is been a very fruitful discussion.

This effectively says, let us reset the clock to the Leader of the Opposition's proposals, as if we had not moved beyond that point through the work of members of all parties and of many Canadian constitutional experts coming forward and presenting thoughts on the various aspects and considerations for taking into account on prorogation. That is the first thing.

Second, the people who have been submitting testimony to this committee, and there are some very impressive individuals, I will name some of them in a moment, have taken the time to go back and examine the various proposals that have been put forward, both the Leader of the Opposition's proposal, the one that was actually passed in the House of Commons in March, and others that were booted at the time that the prorogation was under way and in its aftermath, and have come back with comments on these things.

So, there is already a considerable body of commentary on what the Liberal leader has proposed and some pretty fair criticisms of it.

All of this is ignored and a fairly arrogant assertion is made that we ought to reset the clock and go back and take these ex cathedra pronouncements of the Liberal leader as being, not really our starting point, but as our presupposed finishing point, which is something that, I think, speaks very strongly to arrogance. The preordained conclusions are certainly one thing to think about.

I want to turn now to the proposed special committee and the amendment that was rushed through by the Liberal deputy leader, I think, after the Liberals realized that they had goofed in putting this motion forward.

She proposed several things. First, there would be a delay of the date to November 2. Obviously, June 23 is just preposterous. However, November 2 is, again as my colleague from Hamilton Centre has noted, itself a problematic date in that it is conceivable that our committee will not have reported back by that time.

If it has reported back by that time, the report is likely to have been so freshly done that there would not be time to create the new committee, have it engage in anything, in any work at all other than, I suppose, to agree to adopt the testimony of the previous committee into its records. So, we would have essentially a make-believe committee or, certainly, an extraneous committee producing a report after really no consideration whatsoever.

There is a second interesting possibility. Perhaps given the short timeline, and this is not such a danger. However, if this committee were actually to meet and had enough time to conduct its own hearings all over again, the possibility would exist, in fact, I think the possibility is highly likely, that the committee would come to some different conclusions, unless it simply produces a report to the House that says, "We endorse everything the last committee said". Maybe they can just have a report that just says, "What he said—"

Mr. David Christopherson: Ditto.

Mr. Scott Reid: Or ditto, yes.

"—about the previous committee, the committee on procedure and House Affairs".

But assuming that this does not happen, assuming that it is a different set of recommendations, we now have a problem. The House is now faced with, not one, but two committees which both have, although perhaps different cross-sections, a majority of their membership reporting back with two different sets of conclusions and to the degree they are different, they are necessarily in conflict.

● (1320)

What do we do? Do we adopt one? Do we adopt the other? I am not sure how one would engage a concurrence debate in the House. It would certainly be interesting to deal with that, but it is hard to see how this improves anything.

Finally, I have one last point. I will just note that in her haste to put together some amendment, any amendment, to make it appear that the Liberals actually have some kind of plan at all, other than simply to avoid talking about any actual issue or at least any actual policy proposal, the Liberal deputy House leader produced a proposal for a committee which will have 11 members instead of the normal 12 who are assigned for special committees.

This is as a result of a negotiation that took place among all the House leaders at which she was present. We would always have 12 members for our special committees, and the reason for that was to ensure that we would not find the situation in which, if it is chaired by an opposition member, a tie vote would be cast between the government members and the opposition members. That is not an accurate reflection of the actual makeup of the House, but in their haste to put this together, she seems to have overlooked that point, and I think it once again points to the panic that the Liberals were in as they pulled together this amendment to their own motion.

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Let me talk a little bit about the experts we have heard from. They are a very impressive cross-section of Canadian academia and the constitutional experts who have dealt with this problem and the surrounding issues dealing with Canada's unwritten constitution, that part of the constitution which we have inherited from Great Britain, the powers of the Governor General, the conventions regarding the advice that is given to the Governor General by the Prime Minister, and the conventions regarding where else the Governor General can turn, not for advice in the formal sense, advice meaning effectively instruction in the formal constitutional sense, but rather for other opinions and perspectives. This includes people who have served as advisers to Her Excellency and Her Excellency's predecessors on various political issues in the past.

For example, we have heard from Patrick Monahan, a very distinguished scholar who has advised Her Excellency in the past; Peter Russell, emeritus professor, who likewise has served as a vice-regal adviser. We heard from Nelson Wiseman, who has written extensively on these matters; from Thomas Hall, a former Clerk of the House, who had some very insightful comments; Bradley Miller, who presented to us just two days ago and who has written on the specific issue of conventions. That is the unwritten but generally accepted rules that govern us under the Westminster system. Andrew Heard talked to us, and we could go on.

I will note that as recently as last week, we came to an agreement to invite Professor Hogg to come back and testify before us. Inevitably that will be this autumn. Professor Hogg has also been an adviser to the Governor General and is one of Canada's leading constitutional authorities. As early as last week, the presupposition from the Liberals was that this committee would be meeting and continuing its hearings in the autumn. We will not have gotten to the point where we will sit down, collate the information and try to actually produce the report. We would still be conducting hearings in the autumn.

As befits any hearings into as serious and technically complicated a matter as this, it cannot be done quickly or easily. All of these factors show, first, good work is being done by the current committee and therefore there is no need to supercede it; second, it is just silly to talk about superceding it or replacing it; and third, I think they speak to the main theme that I am addressing today, which is just the disorganization and confusion of the Liberals.

Although the Liberals may not have thought it themselves overtly, I think in their heart of hearts they are starting to come to the conclusion that they really are no longer the natural governing party of Canada, a party that is capable of governing a country. They are really an opposition party that just opposes for the sake of generating attention to themselves, and they have done this without unfortunately having taken the steps that are necessary to be an effective opposition at the level of ideas.

I think there is a role for parties that are in opposition that do not have a real expectation of forming a government. I, myself, was a member of such a party back in the early days of the Reform Party when we did not think we would be forming the government in any immediate point in the future, but we did believe that we could intelligently and effectively advocate ideas. The Liberals have not quite mastered that yet.

● (1325)

I would suggest there is a long history of the CCF that Liberal members could examine which might guide them in this matter. I would suggest they start with comprehensible proposals like the one the leader of the NDP moved back in March, rather than incomprehensible ones such as the one the opposition leader moved. I would suggest they develop ideas and they stick to those ideas consistently and then perhaps they can serve that role.

If the Liberals want to demonstrate that they are capable of governing, which is a legitimate role they had in the past, then they have to start showing that they can conduct themselves in a businesslike manner. They certainly have demonstrated quite the opposite here.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague takes these kinds of issues very seriously. He reads about and is informed on a lot of constitutional issues.

My colleague mentioned Nelson Wiseman as perhaps being a witness at the committee that he attends. Mr. Wiseman of the University of Toronto has said that no Canadian prime minister has abused the prorogation power to the extent that the current Prime Minister has. He has quoted Canada's pre-eminent parliamentary expert, Senator Eugene Forsey, as having said:

An unwanted and uncalled-for prorogation [is] a usurpation of the rights of the House of Commons, a travesty of democracy and a subversion of the constitution. Prorogation is more than mere delay for it prevents the House from voting, holding the government to account and possibly bringing it down.

Does my colleague agree with that quote? Does he believe that the Prime Minister was right to prorogue Parliament?

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, my colleague referenced Nelson Wiseman referencing Eugene Forsey. I think that Eugene Forsey was speaking hypothetically about prorogation. He dealt in more concrete detail with a separate issue, an abuse of prime ministerial power, which did take place in 1926 when the prime minister of the day, Mackenzie King, sought to avoid dealing with a crisis in the House by seeking a dissolution, a somewhat different situation.

With regard to the Prime Minister's use of prorogation, there were only two prorogations actually. There was the one that took place at the end of 2008 which resulted in a new throne speech in early 2009. There was the later prorogation that took place on December 30, 2009, resulting in a throne speech earlier this year in March.

Yes, I do think both of those uses of prorogation were legitimate, and I want to point out to my hon. colleague that he thinks they were legitimate too. He may speak against them, but the fact is that he and his party had the chance to demonstrate their lack of confidence in a government that would use prorogation in the manner it was used by voting non-confidence in the government and forcing an election at that time. His party did not do that. It is always an option at the end of any prorogation in a minority Parliament.

I would simply point out that his party supports the government when the rubber hits the road and members of his party think this is a legitimate use of prorogation too. If they did not, we would have had an election on not one but two occasions.

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• (1330)

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have enjoyed listening to the comments by my colleague from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, who sits on the committee that is dealing with prorogation. People can see where we completely disagree on some fundamentals about prorogation, but on the process, I believe we are like-minded.

There have been other comments by other members. Can the hon. member recall even one occasion when the Liberal members on the committee expressed any kind of concern whatsoever that the work we were doing was not adequate, was not fulsome, that the mandate was not big enough, that the committee was not working? Does he recall any comments at all from the Liberals about the conduct and the ongoing business of the committee already seized with the issue of prorogation?

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is no, but of course I do not want to stop there.

I want to point out that the Liberals have been participating like all of us. It has actually been a useful, fruitful discussion. Not only have the members been working in a very co-operative manner, but the academic experts who have been involved have been reading the testimony at committee and coming back and commenting on it. We have invited experts who have come before us to continue to submit written submissions and they have been doing so. That all indicates that the work of the committee is very sound indeed. I would encourage anybody to read the work of the committee.

I want to point out one interesting thing, though. My hon. colleague might have missed a comment made at about 11:16 this morning—actually, he did not; it was an answer by the Liberal House leader to a question he had asked. She said that she is not concerned that the work of the committee is not broad enough, on the contrary, the problem is it is too broad.

She said that the work the committee has done deals only with an aspect of the prorogation; it does not deal at all with the other aspects of the Liberal motion, the pre-existing Liberal motion, the one that the Leader of the Opposition put forward that, essentially, we have a preordained conclusion we would like to arrive at, and those guys are wandering away from it. That is why I read that. They are wandering away from a preordained conclusion, and based on, heaven forbid, expert testimony, they would like to drag them back to that.

I think that is the fundamental problem with this motion.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for my constituents, accountability is the principle issue.

There is this view that the government has used the prorogation instrument to duck accountability. As a further example, in my own committee, the ethics committee, we have a situation where people have been summoned to appear before the committee by actual summonses because they refused to appear on invitation. The government has put forward in a ministerial statement that ministers are accountable and should be answerable and therefore they will appear at committees in place of those people.

When the law clerk appeared before our committee yesterday, he made it very clear that is correct on matters of policy, and sometimes

on matters of administration. However, when it comes to accountability of persons and the government and to ducking accountability, when some person other than a minister is involved in an allegation of wrongdoing of the laws, that is the person whom the committee has to see. That person would be the only one who would know the facts and the only one who would be able to help the committee do its work.

• (1335)

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of sitting as a member of the ethics committee under the member's chairmanship in the summer of 2008 when the committee had special hearings into the in-and-out scandal, a scandal of profound proportions, one that was going to destroy Canadian democracy because the Conservative Party had illegally spent over its limit.

Those members wanted to bring forward witnesses. Witnesses were abused. The chairman refused to allow any witness to come forward from the Conservative side, anybody suggested by the Conservatives, but allowed every single witness on the Liberal list. As far as I could see, he certainly stretched the rules to the breaking point.

Then, as it turns out in court, a real court, not the kangaroo court the member was conducting, the Conservative Party was not only cleared, but in fact costs were awarded to it from the Elections Canada side that was involved in the litigation against the Conservative Party.

The point I want to make in responding to the member is that I sat in on those meetings. If anybody wants to find out what I think of that chairman's role in chairing that committee, it is a matter of public record and is in the committee *Hansard*.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member not only for his excellent speech but for how he has been answering the questions. He has been very clear. His knowledge is always something that adds to these debates. I want to take this opportunity to thank him.

Are there any situations in the past, historically perhaps, with the Liberal Party where prorogation was used that he might want to bring forward and explain its relevance to the House?

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I think the references being made here are to a couple of prorogations by former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. I cannot remember the exact dates, but he certainly prorogued Parliament in order to achieve other policy goals.

The fact is that prorogation in this country has evolved in a somewhat different direction from the way it has evolved in some other Commonwealth countries. That does not make our use of the system any better or worse. It is very healthy to have a discussion thereon to determine what the conventions ought to be here as opposed to elsewhere.

I will make the obvious point about prorogation in the context of minority governments. If we are talking about prorogation, for example, in the context of an ethics committee that wants to continue operating during the summer months, where the goal is to drag in government members or supporters to humiliate and embarrass them and ask them atrocious questions and deny them of all normal procedural restraints, this never occurs in a majority government. It was never faced by any of the previous majority governments under Prime Minister Chrétien, Prime Minister Trudeau, and others, because they were effectively elected dictators and they controlled the committees.

We should keep the perspective here that the abuse of power that has existed in the past with the Liberals, and I am willing to concede with the Conservatives as well, has taken place normally in the context of majority governments. In this case, the tyranny of the majority is being exercised by opposition committees, led in some cases by members who are present in the House at this very moment.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this issue.

Prorogation became a bit of a household word in Canada this year. It was not a term that was familiar to a great many Canadians, but this year it became familiar to them. They made a point of understanding what was going on.

My colleague, who just spoke, mentioned two prorogations in the last two years. In fact, we have had three in three years. However, the one in 2007 was what one might call a normal prorogation, where toward the end of the summer, the government decided that instead of coming back in September, we would come back in October. Oppositions do not like that, but they understand that this happens on occasion. However, this year and last year, there were two very controversial uses of this blunt instrument. Canadians were outraged. There was a positive side effect to this, which was that Canadians became engaged.

I am splitting my time, Mr. Speaker, with the member for York West.

Canadians became very outraged and that is a good thing. They became involved. We had rallies around the country. I can recall a very cold day in Halifax, being at a rally with other members of Parliament, labour unions and people who were interested. There was a huge crowd that came out to express their concerns. It generated a lot of interest and a lot of anger. This is an issue about democracy.

Canadians may not love their politicians. We know, in general, they do not, but they do expect them to go to work both at home and in Ottawa. We all know there is work to be done at home. There is no question about that, but we follow a schedule that demands that members of Parliament be in Ottawa. This is where the elected voice of Canadians have a chance to impact on public policy, on the comings and goings of the nation, and it is important.

We had heard from some people on the government's side that the prorogation was a normal course of events. We know it was not. I have already referenced Nelson Wiseman from the University of Toronto, who has said that no Canadian prime minister had abused this prorogation power to the extent that the current Prime Minister

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has. He quoted Senator Eugene Forsey, whom I quoted earlier, who had said:

—an unwanted and uncalled-for prorogation a usurpation of the rights of the House of Commons, a travesty of democracy and a subversion of the constitution.

Another great Canadian, whom I do not always agree with but I always read, is Jeffrey Simpson, and he wrote, on January 25:

A prime minister has his forums, of which Parliament is only one. He has cabinet, caucus, and a public platform each and every time he speaks, here and abroad. Parliament, however, is the platform of every point of view from those who have been elected, and the place where, however imperfectly, the government is held to account.

That makes a lot of sense.

There is no question of why Parliament was prorogued. It was a difficult time for the government. The issue of the Afghan detainees was to be studied in committees and the government wanted to shut it down. We know that.

Arthur Kent, who is the brother of a member of the Prime Minister's cabinet, was quoted as saying:

—there has been an unwritten fatwa maintained by the Prime Minister's Office against discussion of any and all controversial aspects of the Afghan debacle...if [the Prime Minister] is uncomfortable with democracy, he should quit his job.

That is good advice and his brother ought to listen to him.

Tom Flanagan, a former campaign manager, said on TV, "Everybody knows that Parliament was prorogued in order to shut down the Afghan inquiry".

The reason this was done this year was to shut down something that was uncomfortable for the government. The year before, it was to avoid a vote of non-confidence. Canadians have voiced their concerns about that.

Why does it really matter? It matters because it is about democracy. It is about a country like Canada, the traditions that make Canada great, that listens to opposition. I contend that the government not only does not want to listen to them, but does not want them to even speak, to even have a voice.

The Prime Minister has been compared on occasion to former president George Bush. I do not think that is accurate. He is more likely and favourably compared to Richard Nixon, where politics trumps everywhere and politics is all that matters. Richard Nixon had his famous enemies list. Dangerous people such as Paul Newman and Mickey Mouse were put on this enemies list and other people had their taxes audited and everything else. In Canada we have an enemies list too of the Prime Minister. I could name all the people who have been shut out by the government, but I only have 10, so I will mention a couple of them.

I want to talk about KAIROS, CCIC and CCL. KAIROS and CCIC are two great voices of international development that for many years have represented a Canadian view on international development, sometimes agreeing with governments, sometimes not.

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● (1340)

KAIROOS and the rebel organizations that are affiliated with it, like the Catholic Church and Presbyterian Church, were defunded in December, totally caught off guard for no reason whatsoever. CCIC and Gerry Barr, who was very highly regarded nationally as well as internationally, have been told they are also in peril.

The Canadian Council on Learning was set up in 2004 to be the voice of Canada when it came to evaluating how we were doing on educating our citizens, a five year program, easily renewable. The government and the Minister of Human Resources have even indicated in committee and in a letter to CCL that CCL is doing great work. The minister speaks often about the need for us to do an inventory of skills in Canada.

How are we doing on post-secondary education? How are we doing on early learning and child care? How are we doing on adult literacy and workplace training? These are very important issues. This was what CCL did. CCL did this with all of the provinces in Canada. CCL had the respect of all international partners. It had the respect of the universities, the community colleges, the students groups, the professors and the researchers in Canada. It was told its funding would not continue. It makes no sense whatsoever.

The government has said that it needs more information, yet it has shut down an organization that provides the very information it says it needs and has left nothing in its place. It said that it would get rid of CCL because it made two mistakes. It was originally funded by a Liberal government and it was doing good work, which is unacceptable to the government. It shut it down, but said that it needed the work CCL had done, but it needed a bit of time to get it going. Does that make any sense? I do not think so. It could not even continue the funding that it had.

Prime ministers leave legacies whether they want to or not. Pierre Trudeau brought us the Constitution Act of 1982. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms brought Canada to a very important place internationally. We are respected in this world and understood for the values we project abroad.

Brian Mulroney did work on apartheid in South Africa. He brought us free trade and the GST. Some may like it and some may not, but in many ways, it transformed the Canadian economy. Mr. Mulroney was a respected international leader.

Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin got the books of Canada in order after a generation or more of them being out of order. They brought Canadians together. They made commitments to Africa. The G20 exists today in large part because of Paul Martin, supported Jean Chrétien.

Those are legacies that people leave.

The current Prime Minister is working on his legacy. When we look back on the work of the government, we will say that the government took one of the world's great democracies and ripped it apart. It is dismantling our social infrastructure, shutting out dissent, shutting out voices and shutting down Parliament.

I think it was Winston Churchill who said, "Democracy is the worst form of government in the world, except for all the rest". It is a messy process. When we encourage people to come in and when we

listen to people, that is important and that is democracy. Governments in the past, whether it was Mr. Mulroney's or Mr. Chrétien's, had all kinds of non-governmental organizations and lots of civil society organizations who they did not agree with and who spoke out loud and clear against government policy.

We did not defund them or shut them down. Whether one agrees with a government or not, those voices need to be heard. Democracy is about those voices. This is part of the same continuum that allows the Prime Minister to shut down Parliament when it becomes inconvenient. In many ways, it is the Prime Minister's inconvenient truth that he does not like democracy. He loves power, but he hates government.

In order to have government and democracy, we need voices. We need voices outside Parliament and inside Parliament. When we shut down those voices, we shut down the ability of Canadians to have input into their government. In my view, what the government has done is wrong and it needs to be fixed.

● (1345)

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I thought it was interesting how my hon. colleague used former prime ministers and their legacies in his speech. He talked a lot about democracy. This morning in committee, a witness was before us, Mr. Jaffer, who chastised the government on that very same thing. He was a former caucus cheerer of the Conservative government. He, again, admonished the government for being undemocratic.

I thought it was very interesting that my colleague wove within his speech evidence of how undemocratic the government had been and the serious challenges to Canada that this had caused.

Could my hon. colleague elaborate a bit more on what he thinks the legacy of the Conservative government will be? Clearly, he thinks it will be proven to be the most undemocratic government in terms of prorogation and closing down debate on things. What else would he like to add to that?

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from St. John's South—Mount Pearl mentioned Mr. Jaffer who was part of the government's legacy. I believe the biggest legacy will be how we have changed Canada in a way that Canadians do not want it to be changed and hopefully we will test that at the next election.

The member talked about Mr. Jaffer. Some of his former colleagues have said some interesting things. The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism was quoted as saying about prorogation, "As a minister, I often get more done when the House is not in session". That tells us something about what listening is done when the government is here.

I like another quote from one of the government members who said, "If we are sitting, how do MPs get to...the Olympic games. It makes sense that we are not sitting". If there is one thing every Canadian from coast to coast to coast can agree with, is the last thing we need at the Olympics is more politicians. We did not need to be prorogued so we could go to the Olympics or so the government could recalibrate. We needed to be prorogued so the government could shut down voices of dissent with which it disagreed.

• (1350)

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. Since he had all the quotes close at hand of other members, when he rises to answer my question, could he quote either himself or other members on how they vehemently objected in the House when the prime ministers he sat under repeatedly prorogued the House? Could he share some of those comments so we could see some continuity in their righteous indignation regarding this?

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, I was not in the House or in the gallery when that may have happened. The government said that this was always happening under the former government. However, all the constitutional experts like Nelson Wiseman have said that no Canadian prime minister has abused the prorogation power to the extent the current Prime Minister has.

We already indicated there was a prorogation in 2007, before 2008 and 2009. We had three in three years. The first though was what might be called a normal prorogation. There are certain times when the House prorogues and everyone says that makes sense. The government may need to recalibrate because it has new ministers, or maybe there is a meeting the prime minister has to attend. Those are normal in the course of events.

What happened in the last two years were attempts to divert attention away from the government or to deliberately contravene democracy in the House. That is a very different use of prorogation than has been used in the past.

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to render homage to the member's father who was a premier of Nova Scotia and who stood up to the public and listened to the people in some very hard times, but he never ignored them. The Prime Minister is the prime minister of prorogation, but he is also the Prime Minister of fake public events, which bar the public from getting access to be in front of their Prime Minister when announcements are made.

How fake is it for a prime minister to avoid the public? The member's father did not.

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, that is one of the greatest questions I have heard in my short time in the House. I agree with him completely and I look forward to discussing it with him when the CFL plays its first ever regular season football game in Moncton in the fall.

He is entirely right and I commend him on the questions he asked yesterday about how the government was playing politics with announcements in New Brunswick.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join this debate and to follow my very esteemed colleague from Dartmouth who has proven himself so very well here in the House of Commons.

I thank the House for the opportunity to speak today in favour of the motion which would, if enacted, help to restore an element of democracy clearly missing here in the House.

I have had the privilege of sitting in the House now for more than a decade but the past four years have shown me just how fragile

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democracy really is, especially when placed in the hands of someone who has little regard for the will of the people or for alternative points of view.

Despite being elected on platform of openness and transparency, the Conservatives have proven themselves to be anything but open and transparent. They have also proven that they will shamelessly use every trick or tactic possible to press through their agenda, regardless of the consequences for the nation as a whole.

The government has fired independent officers of Parliament for simply disagreeing with its policies. It has dismissed Canada's nuclear safety watchdog for suggesting that there might be some safety issues that need to be addressed. It has manipulated G8 and G20 summit budgets for obvious partisan purposes to the tune of more than a billion dollars. The billion dollar boondoggle is what it will go down as in our history books.

Now we have learned from within the Conservative caucus that key ministers might be blocking certain public projects in the Maritimes because improving them might not serve their own narrow political interests. I say shame on that kind of action.

Those are but a few examples but they do not speak to the larger my way or the highway approach to public administration that has been clearly adopted by the Conservatives. It is my way or the highway until the walls start to close in, and then, whenever the heat becomes unbearable or whenever the opposition parties have been pushed to the brink or whenever the systemic safeguards begin to react, the Prime Minister scurries to Rideau Hall and demands prorogation.

Prorogation is a process that, when used in this manner, is tantamount to the schoolyard bully hiding behind the teacher's coattails, begging for an intervention after angry classmates have finally had enough.

While prorogation allows the Prime Minister to sidestep Parliament, the one group of people he cannot fire, the Canadian people, have been busy watching with an ever-deteriorating level of patience.

This was made very clear during the Prime Minister's most recent recalibration, as he called it, during the first few weeks of 2010. Canadians saw his actions for what they really were and they sent the Prime Minister a strong and undeniable signal: stop abusing the authority vested in the PMO and get to work.

Unlike how it is currently being used, prorogation is a parliamentary tool that has historically been used to clear the desks, refocus the government's agenda and even to respond to looming national issues that arise without prior warning.

The Prime Minister's most recent parliamentary shutdown lasted 63 days after a session of 128 days in length. Since 1964, prorogations have lasted 12 days on average and parliamentary sessions have averaged 187 days. I would submit that prorogation is a valid parliamentary mechanism that has served a purpose in the past but I would suggest that the current Prime Minister missed that day when he was learning through the orientation.

Statements by Members

Because of these facts, I have no hesitation in saying that I support this motion and that from time to time governments of all stripes have needed to use prorogation for these legitimate purposes. However, since the current Prime Minister has sat upon his throne, prorogation has morphed into a mechanism of suppression, not only for members of Parliament but for all Canadians.

To find a precedent for such abuses of power, we have to reach all the way back to 1873 when John A. Macdonald tried to stop Parliament from probing his railway scandal. To me, it seems as though, whenever the current government finds itself in a tight spot, it pulls the plug on the people's House so as to avoid the oversight that can and should be provided by Parliament.

• (1355)

At first I wondered if the flagrant misuse of prorogation was the result of the total lack of understanding as to the traditions of Parliament, the practice and procedures normally used in a parliamentary system of government. However, as the obfuscation and democratic disregard continued to grow, it became apparent that the government knew quite well that it was violating the spirit of democracy that it had previously so vigorously promised to uphold.

It is for those very reasons that I am now in the category of people who believe that, due to the repeated abuse of prorogation by the Prime Minister, controls must be implemented if unfettered democracy is to again appear in this wonderful chamber of ours. The Liberal motion before the House today strives to do just that.

The motion would permit the Prime Minister to use prorogation subject to the House's oversight for the purpose for which it was intended but would impose real controls against abuse of power.

For example, the motion would impose "a requirement that the Prime Minister give Parliament written notice in advance of any request to prorogue, together with his/her reasons therefore". Who could possibly object to that? It sounds like a normal practice that should happen. If all members felt Parliament should prorogue, then we would all vote in favour of it.

All that is being asked is that the Prime Minister not pull the rug out from under the House without a valid reason. Imagine what the real impact would be? Had Parliament not been closed down for two months at the beginning of 2010, we could have actually given thoughtful consideration to the pardons bill that the government has now demanded we pass immediately with no discussion and, if we do not pass it, we will be criticized for not doing so.

I understand that the parties have now reached a deal on this matter but that is only because the opposition parties were willing to collaborate on behalf of all Canadians. The deal certainly says nothing to the government's ability to plan ahead, as we have clearly seen in the boondoggle with the G8-G20 summit, and to proactively manage the nation's business or co-operate with other elected officials.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 2 o'clock, I need to interrupt the member. She will have three minutes remaining when the House returns to this matter.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the environmental disaster in the Gulf of Mexico painfully illustrates the high price of fossil fuels. These fuels are increasingly costly and difficult to extract. It is urgent that we transition to cleaner forms of energy.

That is why I commend the government's efforts through the clean energy dialogue and I encourage the government to accelerate these efforts and negotiate a Canada-U.S. climate change treaty with the Obama administration.

A Canada-U.S. climate change treaty would allow us, as North Americans, to lead the world at the UN climate change summit in Mexico this November and would greatly increase the likelihood of a legally binding global treaty.

Global and local actions are necessary.

That is why I also commend the village of Eden Mills in Ontario for going carbon neutral and for being a national Hometown Heroes award finalist sponsored by Cascades and the Royal Bank.

The gulf disaster shows that we need to act quickly and we need to act now.

* * *

ROBERT BRUCE SALTER

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to remember Dr. Robert Bruce Salter, a world-renowned orthopedic surgeon at the Hospital for Sick Children, who passed away peacefully on May 10 with his family by his side.

I will briefly highlight some of his extraordinary accomplishments. He developed a procedure to correct congenital dislocation of the hip. He pioneered continuous passive motion for the treatment of joint injuries. He wrote a textbook of orthopedic surgery called *Textbook of Disorders and Injuries of the Musculoskeletal System*, which is used worldwide.

He was an inductee into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame, a Companion of the Order of Canada and a recipient of the Order of Ontario.

While one of the best and most respected orthopedic surgeons in the world, he just wanted to be remembered as a surgeon who treated children.

I hope everyone in this House will join me in remembering this remarkable man.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

GINETTE LAMOUREUX

Mr. Roger Gaudet (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to highlight the 20 years that a woman in my riding, Ginette Lamoureux, has been involved in Regroup'elles, an organization providing assistance to women who are victims of domestic violence.

Ms. Lamoureux joined the Regroup'elles board of directors in 1990 and has been employed there since 1995. Now the director of the organization, she spearheaded the project to provide a shelter for women, seeing it through to completion two years ago. The organization already offered a telephone support service.

A woman who does not sit back and wait for others to take action, Ms. Lamoureux is known and loved by everyone and has extraordinary energy and determination. I would like to thank her from the bottom of my heart for her dedication to women and also for the contribution she has made to our community.

We thank Ginette, for these 20 years of service to women who are victims of domestic violence. Keep up the good work; they still need you. The whole community is indebted to her for the services she provides.

* * *

[English]

STEWART MEMORIAL CHURCH

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, throughout this year, the Stewart Memorial Church in my riding of Hamilton Centre will be celebrating its 175th anniversary.

Founded in 1835 by fugitive slaves who came to Hamilton on the underground railroad, Stewart Memorial Church remains as one of the oldest predominantly black churches in Canada.

Stewart Memorial has played a significant role in Hamilton's history as a centre for outreach and celebration and a positive force for change in our community. As a gathering place, it has brought people together for various events, and it remains an important institution in Hamilton's black community.

On August 14 and 15, the church will be holding its homecoming 2010 celebrations, which will include a street festival, a cultural marketplace and music and dance performances. More information about the anniversary celebrations can be found at www.stewartmemorialchurch.com.

On behalf of all members, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Stewart Memorial Church and wish it continued success for many years to come.

* * *

JUSTICE LEGISLATION

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the spring session of this House moves toward conclusion, I am relieved that this House has finally found a compromise on Bill C-23 to prevent dangerous offenders convicted of serious crimes from receiving pardons.

However, I am convinced that the only reason such a compromise was reached was due to the outcry of thousands of Canadians and their many calls to many MPs' offices demanding immediate action.

It is reassuring to know that members of the soft on crime coalition still occasionally listen to their constituents and act on their wishes.

I hope that those members will pay similar attention to the express wishes of their constituents over the summer and that, come this fall, the soft on crime coalition will stop stalling important pieces of legislation, such as Bill C-4, which would make crucial amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

I also trust that the 20 opposition members who voted in favour of Bill C-391 will be capable of applying that same democratic deference this fall and finally bring an end to a wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

* * *

● (1405)

CUPIDS 400

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today and let everyone know about a time that is being held back home this year, with the premier events being held from August 17 to 22. We are celebrating one of the largest cultural events ever in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Cupids, a wonderful town in my riding, was the site of the first English settlement established in Canada. Some 400 years ago John Guy and 39 men established Cupids as their home and set out to secure and make safe the trade of fishing.

We are celebrating with over 50 events this year. There is a phenomenal summer schedule which on every day promotes traditional entertainment, archaeology and cultural significance and history through classical theatre.

Just a few days ago I had the distinct pleasure to participate in the official laying of the keel to begin building a replica of John Guy's vessel *The Indevour* in the community of Winterton.

There is something for everyone and I encourage members to visit the Cupids 400 website at cupids400.com.

The events surrounding Cupids 400 will not have come together without the hard work of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wetaskiwin.

* * *

RETIREMENT WISHES

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members all know the value of excellent staff who assist us daily in our duties as MPs. Staff come and go, but every so often one stands out and gives his or her all in supporting the MP.

Today I rise to salute the career of one such employee. Maureen Laffin O'Brien has worked on Parliament Hill for almost 30 years as a legislative assistant.

Statements by Members

In 1981 she began her career working with Howard Crosby from Nova Scotia and remained with him for 12 years.

In 1993 newly elected Dale Johnston was in need of a guiding hand and hired Maureen to get his Ottawa office up and running. It did not take Dale long to realize that Maureen was a keeper, knowing the ins and outs of Ottawa. She stayed with Dale, serving for his entire 12 years as a member, forging a lasting friendship along the way.

In 2006 Maureen joined my office. She showed remarkable patience as I learned the ropes and has been a true friend and confidante since I arrived.

I want to thank Maureen for her tireless work, keen political advice and years of loyal service. Her talent, wisdom and positive demeanour will be greatly missed on the Hill. Twenty-nine years with three MPs is remarkable.

On behalf of all the staff, past and present, and everyone Maureen touched here on Parliament Hill, I would like to wish her good health and a happy and well-deserved retirement.

* * *

[Translation]

MAUREEN FORRESTER

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, star contralto Maureen Forrester died yesterday. Born in Montreal in 1930, she began her career in church choirs.

She gave her debut concert in 1953 with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, but it was not until a 1956 Carnegie Hall performance that her international career took off. She headlined in the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, France, England, Germany, Spain, Argentina, and many other countries. She was known for her perfect mastery of German pronunciation. She excelled in several musical styles, including classical, opera, musical comedy, burlesque and popular song.

She also taught at the University of Toronto and chaired the vocal arts department of the Philadelphia Music Academy. She chaired the Canada Council for the Arts from 1983 to 1988.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I extend our sincere condolences to her five children, her family and her friends.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers in my riding of Prince Albert and all across Saskatchewan are facing the worst flooding in decades. Up to 30% of the farmland may be left unseeded and farmers need help to get through these difficult times.

Our government, working with the province, has extended agri-insurance deadlines twice to give farmers as much time as possible to get their crops in. If they cannot, crop insurance will pay out as soon as farmers make a claim.

Greg Marshall, the president of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, or APAS, has praised this program

saying, “We are pleased crop insurance is being flexible and extending these deadlines to help address the needs of producers”.

Additionally, our second line of defence, agri-stability, will allow farmers to take out cash advances to help weather this storm.

I would like to thank our Conservative government's Minister of Agriculture for travelling to Saskatchewan yesterday in order to make sure our programs give farmers the support they need.

* * *

● (1410)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative chair of the public safety committee was forced to apologize for denigrating Canada's 450 chiefs of police after calling them “a cult”, and the Conservative assault on the integrity of our police forces continues.

The Conservative MP for Saint Boniface unequivocally stated in committee, “There were officers who suffered consequences at the hands of chiefs like Mr. Blair, who transferred them when they spoke out...”.

Absolutely no evidence to substantiate this serious allegation of witness intimidation and workplace harassment was ever provided by that MP, yet she refuses to retract or apologize for making this ruinous allegation.

Parliamentary privilege is a tool to get at the truth of issues. However, when abused, it provides cover to the abuser, allowing the member for Saint Boniface to savage the good reputation of the chief.

Does the Minister of Public Safety condone this attack on the chiefs of police or will he apologize to Toronto Chief of Police William Blair, who has an exemplary 33 year record of serving and protecting our citizenry?

* * *

[Translation]

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is “The Bloc and the Quebecker”:

Having spent its time
Sitting on its thumbs,
The Bloc was glum
Now that summer had come.
Not one vote for Quebecers
From this opportunistic, simplistic party.

When asked to explain
their raison d'être and justify their existence
Until the new session,
I'll tell you by August, said the Bloc,
Disinformation and pie in the sky,
That is what the Bloc lives by.

But the Quebecer is no fool,
That's what makes him so cool.

What did you do all that time?
He said to these freeloaders.

Week in and week out
We talked round about.

You talked? said the Quebecer to the Bloc.
Well, now start dancing!

* * *

[English]

BOMBING OF AIR INDIA FLIGHT 182

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, next week will mark the 25th anniversary of the tragic Air India bombing in 1985 that killed 331 innocent men, women and children.

Sadly, Canadians are still waiting for justice to be served, and the families of victims are still repairing deep emotional wounds and fractured home lives.

Throughout almost two decades of stonewalling by the government, the victims' families have shown tremendous endurance, strength and courage. The onus is now on the federal government to ensure that a tragedy like this will never happen again.

We hope the report brings peace and closure to the victims' families. We hope the guilty face justice. However, it will require government agencies to co-operate and share their information. Most importantly, this report must be scrutinized by Parliament and implemented as a priority to ensure that the government can prevent future attacks.

I urge all Canadians to take a moment and reflect once again on one of Canada's most horrendous acts of violence. We join the families in support and solidarity as they continue to grieve and mourn the loss of their loved ones.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite opposition mudslinging and attempts to score cheap political points, our government remains focused on the economy.

Canada's strong economic performance is a testament to the leadership of our Prime Minister and our Conservative government. Since July of last year, Canada has created almost 310,000 new jobs.

Statements by Members

With numbers like this, it is not surprising that the influential magazine, *The Economist*, recently called Canada "an economic star".

It is encouraging to see Canada's economy on the right track, thanks to our government's actions. Nonetheless the global recovery remains fragile. That is why we need to fully implement Canada's economic action plan.

While our plan is helping Canada lead the way on jobs and growth, the Liberal leader's plan to raise taxes would halt our recovery in its tracks and kill almost 400,000 jobs.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

EDUCATION FOR ALL

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 2000, 189 countries signed the Dakar Declaration and committed to achieving education for all by 2015. Taking advantage of this year's World Cup, UNESCO, supported by FIFA, has launched a campaign to rally public opinion on the importance of education.

In Quebec, the Montreal Impact and the Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes are running the IGOAL: Education for All campaign. People all over the world must have access to education, which is why it is so important for the federal government to achieve its target of 0.7% of GDP for official development assistance. That is why I urge the people of Quebec to sign the petition: "Sign your name for those who can't".

I would also like to highlight the remarkable contribution of Pierre Martin, who passed away earlier this week. Mr. Martin took on a number of roles in Quebec's education department under Paul Gérin-Lajoie, and helped create Quebec's university network, which was designed to improve access to a university education.

* * *

ROBERT MIDDLEMISS

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to honour the memory of a former Liberal member of the National Assembly of Quebec, Robert Middlemiss.

Robert was a McGill University graduate and a geotechnical engineering consultant. He began his career in politics as a municipal councillor for the former city of Aylmer from 1970 to 1979.

"Bob" was the MNA for Pontiac from 1981 to 2003. He served as the parliamentary assistant to the minister of the environment and to the minister of health and social services, later becoming minister responsible for agriculture, the fisheries, food, transport and public safety.

We will miss his generosity, his dedication and his love for our region. We want to acknowledge his vision and his great determination to develop McConnell-Laramée Boulevard, which is now Allumettières Boulevard.

I offer my deepest condolences to his wife Lorraine and his family.

Oral Questions

Bob, we thank you and we salute you.

* * *

[English]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the summer break is almost here and it is important to highlight that there are 20 opposition MPs who will have one very important question posed to them this summer by their constituents: How will they vote on Bill C-391?

I encourage the eight Liberal and 12 NDP members of Parliament to spend their time away from Ottawa listening to their constituents, and when they return, to vote in favour of Bill C-391.

Once again, I also ask that both the Liberal and NDP leaders do the right thing and allow all of their MPs to vote freely on this issue and have the ability to truly reflect their own beliefs and that of their constituents.

It is time to end the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry. Canadians know this. They also know the choice is clear. Members should either vote to keep the long gun registry or vote to scrap it, as they did at second reading. It is that simple.

The people they represent deserve to be heard.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

AIR INDIA

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister about the Air India inquiry.

First, I want to say very clearly that we commend the Government of Canada for having commissioned this inquiry and we commend the commissioner for his extraordinary work and his great diligence, and I am sure all Canadians stand in solidarity with the Air India families.

[Translation]

But the question remains, and it is a difficult question for the Prime Minister. In his report, Commissioner Major criticized the complacent attitude of the agencies, even in speaking to the commission, concerning the problems that have not yet been resolved.

What does the Prime Minister—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the commissioner, Justice Major, for his report and for his dedication to a project that is so important to our country. The government launched this inquiry in order to get at the truth. Several aspects of the truth are very disturbing, and the government will take the appropriate action.

• (1420)

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on page 146 of his report, the commissioner clearly states that there are still

problems, even with some of the agencies' testimony before the commission. He discovered a sunny attitude that was not based on the facts or the reality. He clearly said that the commission took issue with that sunny attitude.

What will the Prime Minister do to ensure that the attitude of those agencies changes—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

[English]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat my earlier answer. We all thank Justice Major for his report and for his incredible devotion over, I think, the past three years in getting to the bottom of this and getting to the truth in this matter. I know it has very difficult for everyone involved.

There is absolutely no doubt, in my own experience, that there was a lot of resistance to this inquiry. I think Justice Major made some reference to that fact and also to my interventions in that regard. The government will take those recommendations into consideration and ensure we drive forward with real change.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Prime Minister's answer but it has to be said that the commissioner takes the unusual step in his report of saying that even up to the point of the evidence presented by the government before the commission, even during the last two or three years, he did not detect a change of attitude on the part of those agencies, not only with respect to what had happened in 1985 and the years before and immediately after, but even up until today.

There is a culture of complacency, which is dangerous for the country. I wonder if the Prime Minister can tell us what specific steps he intends to take to ensure—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did have a good discussion with the families on that very subject today. It is very clear that this government intends there to be change, which is why we appointed the inquiry. Obviously, while we commit to moving forward on the recommendations, today is a day to think about the families and the loved ones who have been living with the deaths of these over 300 Canadians for a quarter of a century now.

I am glad we are getting to the bottom of this and will be able to move forward but it is a reminder that we should never treat security lightly in this country.

* * *

G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when next week's G8 summit starts, world leaders will not visit \$50 million in unfinished mud parks, bridges, gazebos and a sunken boat paid for in their names. While world leaders cannot visit unfinished pork, tourists will not be going to Toronto. The U.S. just issued a travel advisory not to visit Toronto during the G8.

At the height of the tourist season, Conservatives are shutting down Toronto.

Oral Questions

The Economist magazine is now calling the \$1 billion in waste a “loonie boondoggle”. How much more of an international embarrassment can this get?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is very proud to be hosting the G8 and G20 meetings. We have indicated that a large part of the costs associated with these meeting deal with security concerns. These concerns are legitimate and they are in line with what most consultants have indicated to us. We are looking forward to welcoming here in Canada the leaders from these countries, as well as all of their delegations.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he should tell that to the 78% of Canadians who think the spending is out of control.

Here is the problem. The Conservatives approved \$50 million in projects under the banner of the G8 that have zero to do with the summit. This is not a gazebo and ice rink sales convention. It is a world leaders' meeting on international debt.

I am not talking about the \$500,000 the Conservatives spent on the bunny hop trail or the \$50 million and other pork shoved into the minister's riding. I am talking about this G8 legacy fund, a bonus \$50 million for the minister in the name of the summit that has nothing to do with the summit at all.

How do they justify this?

• (1425)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has done some 12,000 infrastructure projects in every corner of the country.

We have two major goals as part of our economic action plan: one is to create badly needed jobs in the short term, and the other is to improve public infrastructure in the long term. We are accomplishing both of those objectives. We have seen since July the creation of more than 300,000 new jobs. Our plan is working.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC NATION

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 20 years after the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, the Conservative government has proven over the course of this parliamentary session that it will never back up its recognition of the Quebec nation with concrete measures. The government's bill to reduce Quebec's political weight in the House of Commons is evidence of that.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, for him, recognizing the Quebec nation was merely symbolic and that what he really wants to do is marginalize it?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, those of us on this side of the House have made it clear that we recognize the Quebec nation within a united Canada. The only party in the House of Commons still questioning that is the Bloc Québécois. Proportional representation by population is a basic principle in the 1867 Constitution.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that principle has been applied very generously in the case of Prince Edward Island.

Federalism has been bad for the Quebec nation both politically and economically. The government is refusing to give Quebec the \$2.2 billion it is owed for harmonizing its sales tax, despite having compensated the Atlantic provinces, Ontario and British Columbia.

Is that not further proof that the Prime Minister could not care less about Quebec, its priorities or its National Assembly?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. Again, this government's policy is to offer all provinces the opportunity to harmonize their sales taxes with the federal tax, the GST. Five provinces have decided to do that, but Quebec chose another route. It decided to keep two separate taxes. We want true tax harmonization. Negotiations with Quebec are ongoing, and I hope that Quebec will decide to harmonize its sales tax with the GST.

* * *

SECURITIES

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, disputes with this government have multiplied. Open federalism has become predatory federalism. The issue of securities, in which the Conservatives want to take from Quebec to give to Ontario, is one example. The project is so flawed that the minister is incapable of clearly telling us whether or not it provides for the dismantling of the passport system.

Could the Minister of Finance clearly tell us if the passports issued by regulators, such as the AMF, will be unconditionally recognized, should his commission ever see the light of day? Clearly, please.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have been saying, it will be a system that is—

An hon. member: Voluntary.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Yes, it will be a voluntary system. You have listened closely. It is a voluntary system. That is correct. Voluntary means voluntary, nothing else.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this government turned its back on the Quebec forestry sector in favour of the auto sector, which is concentrated in Ontario. Although it gave \$10 billion to the auto sector, it gave only \$170 million to the entire forestry sector.

Faced with such an imbalance, how can this government keep claiming that it defends the interests of Quebec, when it helps Ontario and not Quebec?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, how can the member make so many false claims in one question?

Oral Questions

We helped the forestry industry in Quebec and in the rest of the country. I remind the member that the loans given to the auto sector have almost all been repaid, and the companies continue to pay them back. We will continue to support the forestry industry in Quebec, while others will just talk, as in the fable we heard earlier.

Today we heard yet more bad news about the market. The price of softwood lumber has gone down, but we will continue to support this industry. The market has been the problem from the beginning.

* * *

● (1430)

[English]

AIR INDIA

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I have to give three thanks. I thank the families who called for an inquiry into the Air India tragedy so that no other Canadian families would have to suffer what they suffered through, I thank the government for calling the inquiry and I thank Justice Major for his very important report.

I am hopeful, and perhaps the Prime Minister can give us an indication here, that he will be grabbing hold of the initiative offered by Justice Major to provide some coordination to our national security services to pull things together because there has been this attitude of complacency that he noted. I think it is an urgent matter that needs to be taken care of quickly. I would simply encourage the Prime Minister to do so.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the NDP for his kind words and also for his support for this inquiry dating back to when we were in opposition. I have noted Justice Major's recommendations and his critique. I think I was very clear on the nature of that critique earlier today.

Steps have been taken through the creation of the position of the national security advisor to provide greater coordination to our security apparatus. We have seen that pay off to some extent in cases like the Toronto 18. Clearly, more needs to be done and we will be acting on that.

* * *

[Translation]

G8 SUMMIT

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on another matter, from an organization standpoint the G8 summit is becoming more and more of a fiasco.

The United States has announced that it does not want Americans to visit Toronto during the G8. This will harm businesses in our community. Small- and medium-sized businesses and other businesses that suffer losses will need help from the federal government. The management of this project is questionable at best, especially when small- and medium-sized businesses are not being put first and will suffer losses because of this summit.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already indicated, the Government of Canada is not legally bound to pay compensation for losses suffered as a

result of international meetings held in Canada. However, the policy in place is fair and has been effective in the past. It is the same policy that was in place for the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City and the summit in Kananaskis before that. The assessment of all claims will be made in close co-operation with Audit Services Canada.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, world leaders are piling on the Conservative government when it comes to keeping the environment off the G20 agenda. The national health initiative turned sour because the government reopened the debate on abortion.

Most recently, we had the UN special advisor, Jeffrey Sachs, slamming our Prime Minister and saying that Canada was failing to live up to the tradition of Lester Pearson by falling far short of his target for international aid.

How can the Prime Minister explain such a blow to Canada's reputation?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, Canada's initiative on maternal and child health has been widely welcomed by all of our G8 partners and, indeed, the wider international community. As I have indicated before, it is traditional to have some discussion of climate change at these conferences, but not in a way that interferes with the role of the United Nations process.

As for development assistance, Canada is the first country in the world to have met all its international aid commitments, to have reached all of the goals set by the G8, the first one to do that across the entire world.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's refusal to fund access to safe abortion where legal is not just unethical and paternalistic, it also flies in the face of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, including government members, who yesterday recommended that access to safe abortion be funded by Canada at the G8.

Will the Conservative government adopt the committee's recommendations and end its shameful denial of legal rights of mothers abroad?

● (1435)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the opposition wants to reopen this debate, but Canadians want us to focus on saving the lives of women and children. I am proud the members on the Status of Women committee from the Conservative Party are supporting a minority report that clearly states that witnesses urged the members of the committee to focus on helping women and children and to stop playing political games. Those witnesses are right. The members on this side of the House are correct, and I will be happy to table the report after question period.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives claim they are helping women and children, yet they are ignoring the advice of experts.

Jeffrey Sachs, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General, said that the Conservatives' refusal to fund safe abortions was "disappointing and far from accountable".

The Conservatives finally relented and added the environment to the G8 and G20 agendas.

Will they listen to the international community and the majority of Canadians, and reconsider their regressive plan for maternal health?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the international community supports our plan to save the lives of women and children. In fact, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton gave praise to Canada. She said:

We commend the Canadian government for focusing attention on this issue by offering a flagship initiative on maternal and child health at the upcoming G8 meeting.

The international community supports us, international aid agencies support us, the G8 supports us, Hillary Clinton supports us. I wish the opposition would support us.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Prairie farmers are facing their worst spring seeding situation in history. It is too wet and too cold and 30% of the crop is not yet in the ground and what is in, is being flooded out. The provincial governments say that they are willing to cost share a disaster program but they need specific information from the federal government by the first week in July.

Exactly how much new funding is the agriculture minister asking from the Treasury Board to top up existing programs and will farmers have clear answers by the first week in July?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that I have working in close contact with industry in Saskatchewan as well as the minister of agriculture in Saskatchewan, Bob Bjornrud. We have putting our numbers together. We have been doing our assessments. We have extended the time frame on crop insurance. I know the crop reports that come on June 25 will be very helpful in moving forward.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just like the Minister of Agriculture fails farmers, the Minister of Transport fails them even worse. He allows the railways to gouge farmers with excessive freight rates. A study released yesterday shows farmers are overcharged by the railways on an average \$200 million per year. That is \$17,000 to \$32,000 per farm, ripped off by the railways, condoned by the minister.

Why no costing review and why does the Minister of Transport allow the railways to gouge farmers?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing more hypocritical than the member for Malpeque standing on this issue is the Wheat Board buying into this crazy logic. Certainly farmers are involved when it comes to transportation. They rely on the Wheat Board to set the best price for them. The Wheat Board constantly brags it is doing that, now it is crying that it is not able to do it. Someone has the figures wrong.

We are not hearing any concerns from canola and pulse growers, we are hearing concerns from Wheat Board growers because they cannot value add. They are forced to do buybacks, which costs them far more than this supposed increase in freight.

I know the minister from Alberta in charge of transport is doing a great job on this review and it will be good news for farmers.

* * *

*[Translation]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the issue of fighting climate change illustrates the Conservatives' bias in favour of Canadian oil companies to the detriment of Quebec's green economy. By refusing to implement an effective plan to fight greenhouse gas emissions, the federal government is protecting the oil sands but damaging Quebec's economy, which would benefit from having a carbon exchange in Montreal.

When will the Conservative government realize how much harm it is causing to Quebec and its economy by refusing to address climate change?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the opposition is attacking the government while respected international organizations are applauding our efforts. For instance, the March 2010 Pew report ranked Canada sixth for investment in green energy. In April 2010, the International Energy Agency congratulated Canada on its commitment to increase its clean electricity production. Yesterday, the same agency recognized the major efforts Canada is making to develop carbon storage.

● (1440)

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has signed an agreement with Newfoundland and Nova Scotia regarding mining the seabed in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The Government of Quebec has been calling for a similar agreement for 12 years. The government's stubbornness is preventing Quebec from making decisions under its own environmental assessment system, which is one of the best in the world.

Why is the government refusing to give Quebec the same advantages it is giving to Newfoundland and Nova Scotia?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quebec is continuing its evaluation of the opportunity presented by the hydrocarbon potential in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and adjacent onshore. The federal government is ready to work with the province of Quebec as we are with provinces all across the country to ensure the responsible and sustainable development of our natural resources across Canada.

* * *

*[Translation]***QUEBEC NATION**

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this House recognized the Quebec nation but stubbornly refuses to give expression to that recognition. To strengthen its identity and protect its national culture, the needs of Quebec include having Bill 101 apply to enterprises under federal jurisdiction, a telecommunications and broadcasting commission of its own and an exemption from the multiculturalism act.

Is the refusal of the Canadian parties to adopt our bills on these matters not proof that Canadian nation building is done at the expense of Quebec?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a good understanding of the Bloc Québécois' policies. It is just not in the interest of Quebecers or Canada. Our government has programs, investments and laws that protect the identity of Quebecers and also the national unity of Canada.

* * *

COPYRIGHT

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, groups of Quebec's artists, creators, authors, publishers and even consumers are opposed to Bill C-32 on copyright because the bill ignores the consensus of the Quebec cultural community concerning the remuneration of artists through levies on digital audio recorders and through making Internet service providers more accountable.

Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages admit that everyone in Quebec is opposed to his copyright vision, which benefits neither creators nor consumers?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing the Bloc Québécois has proposed in this regard is a massive new tax directed at consumers, which would also affect artists. This is what the president of the Canadian Recording Industry Association had to say, "I do not think that is the solution. I do not think the artists will benefit. ...No one will benefit."

[English]

Here is what Loreena McKennitt, who is a Juno Award winning songwriter, said, "I too would oppose the itax. I would rather have a strict and predictable business model in which I can conduct my business as an artist".

That is what they need. They do not need an itax from the Bloc Québécois.

* * *

*[Translation]***ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY**

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in the House, the ACOA minister attacked the credibility of the member for New Brunswick Southwest. However, the member took it one step further that evening, confirming the very damaging discussions he had had with the Prime Minister.

When will this government stop trying to interfere in New Brunswick's provincial politics? And when will the Prime Minister reprimand the ACOA minister?

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, fairness and equity, not politics, are the basis for all funding announcements as part of Canada's economic action plan in New Brunswick and in all of Canada.

The member opposite talks about funding. His riding alone, under RInC and CAF, recreational infrastructure and the community adjustments fund, received \$7 million worth of federal funding in projects, with no input from him.

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the mayor of Moncton was here yesterday. He was asking for a lot more.

There are allegations of the transport minister meddling in the Ottawa mayor's race. We had the Conservatives breaking election rules in the in and out scandal. Now the Prime Minister is withholding building Canada funding in New Brunswick Southwest until his former director of communications, John Williamson, has the riding nomination and can take credit on his own.

What is wrong with the member for New Brunswick Southwest? Will the prime minister of prorogation admit and confirm that funding for the St. George civic project, which the member for New Brunswick Southwest wanted, will be confirmed and will be paid?

● (1445)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have had a great relationship with this New Brunswick government, with the previous New Brunswick government. We have concluded literally dozens and dozens of projects, creating a lot of jobs in every corner of New Brunswick.

We have been incredibly fair and incredibly decent. In fact, the project that the hon. member speaks of was one of the ones we considered last year, when the member for New Brunswick Southwest was the political minister, and regrettably we chose to fund other projects.

SYDNEY HARBOUR

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today an all party delegation from Cape Breton has come to the Hill to push for the dredging of Sydney Harbour. The government has known about this project for years. The Cape Breton Regional Municipality, the province and the private sector are on side. The only seat empty is the federal government. Time is of—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. We have to have some order. The hon. member for Sydney—Victoria has the floor. We will want to hear the question.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Mr. Speaker, time is of the essence. If the federal government continues to delay, the contractor will pull anchor and move on.

Once again, when will the government commit to dredging Sydney Harbour?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was darned interesting. I would like the member opposite to tell me what he did for 13 years. What that party do? Nothing. In fact, I am very pleased to meet with the committee this afternoon. After a request of two weeks, we are having it here this afternoon.

The more important thing in the last year in Cape Breton alone is the \$43 million worth of federal funding. That is what is important.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): I will tell you what the member did, Mr. Speaker. He put \$400 million together to clean up the Sydney tar ponds. Then the Tory hacks tried to steal—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: —the minister has been nowhere on this file. There has been no voice on this. Where is it tied up? Either the Prime Minister is not listening or the minister is not speaking. It is one or the other. He did his job; you do yours.

The Speaker: I assure the hon. member that I will. The hon. Minister of National Revenue, I believe, is rising to answer this question that may have been directed at me.

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can recommend some real good blood pressure medicine for the hon. member. Who announced the clean up of the Sydney tar ponds? This government did, and we are proud of it.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the brother and father of 16-year-old Aqsa Parvez pleaded guilty yesterday to murdering her.

[Translation]

Why was she killed? Because she refused to wear a hijab, which her father saw as an act of defiance and women's independence that brought shame on him. That is unacceptable.

Oral Questions

[English]

Will the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism tell the House our Conservative government's position on honour killings like this one?

[Translation]

Is multiculturalism an excuse for honour killings?

• (1450)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

No, it is not an excuse. I want to be clear: multiculturalism is never an excuse for such crimes, particularly crimes against women and honour killings.

That is why we included the following in the new citizenship guide, *Discover Canada*:

In Canada, men and women are equal under the law. Canada's openness and generosity do not extend to barbaric cultural practices that tolerate spousal abuse, "honour killings," female genital mutilation, or other gender-based violence.

This is something we condemn.

* * *

[English]

TAX-FREE SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians who opened tax-free savings accounts have now found out that these accounts are anything but tax free. In fact, they have become tax-grab savings accounts.

People are facing huge penalties for over-contributing, because the rules are neither clear nor sensible. People who are simply replacing money they had withdrawn are now having their contributions double-counted, and they are being hit with massive penalties.

Will the government admit that it screwed up, waive the penalties for people who contributed in good faith, and rewrite the rules to prevent this from happening in the future?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to hear a reasonable question for a change.

Our government has built on our aggressive tax relief by reducing taxes on savings with the landmark tax-free savings account, the most important personal savings vehicle since RRSPs.

The vast majority of the 4.6 million Canadians who opened a TFSA understood the rules and acted accordingly. Unfortunately, about 70,000 Canadians may have accidentally over-contributed to their TFSAs. We are not looking to unfairly punish those people.

* * *

POVERTY

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are currently at least 3.5 million Canadians living in poverty. This figure is totally unacceptable.

Oral Questions

Poverty costs this country \$90 billion, an amount that one Conservative senator has called wasteful. This is a loss of potential and a loss of tax revenue.

Yesterday we introduced a bold plan to end poverty in Canada. Will the Prime Minister admit to Canadians that we cannot afford poverty anymore? Will he finally show some leadership and commit to a comprehensive national poverty elimination strategy?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member would have a lot more credibility if he and his party would actually do something to help instead of talk about it.

The facts are that since the previous government, we have seen poverty rates in this country decline. In fact, poverty rates among seniors are at a record low of 4.8%. Among children we are among the lowest in the world.

Our government has taken numerous measures to improve the financial situation of Canadians. Sadly, every single time, they talk about it and vote against it.

* * *

[Translation]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a broad coalition in Quebec is calling for the firearms registry to be maintained. The National Assembly, public health experts, police officers and families of victims of crime all want the control of long guns to continue. However, the Conservatives and part of the NDP caucus want to dismantle the registry. In addition, there is no guarantee that the Liberals will vote in favour of the registry.

Why does this government want to eliminate the long gun registry, a registry that saves lives and is universally supported in Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak on behalf of the NDP or the Liberals. I know what commitments 20 of those members made, and they will have to answer for that to their constituents.

Let me make clear one issue: While we support the licensing of people and the registration of prohibited and restricted weapons, we do not support the wasteful long gun registry. There are many effective ways that we could prevent crime, and I look forward to working with the member in that respect.

* * *

[Translation]

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the National Assembly of Quebec, the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, the Association québécoise Plaidoyer-Victimes, the Barreau du Québec, youth centres, the Regroupement des organismes de justice alternative du Québec and many other organizations all condemn the Conservative government's young offenders bill.

Will the government amend its bill to comply with Quebec's rehabilitation model, an approach that for 25 years has given Quebec the lowest youth crime rate in Canada and one of the lowest in North America?

• (1455)

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in the bill that in any way interferes with provincial discretion or the programming of the province of Quebec.

All I say to the hon. member is that he should have a look at the bill, and he will recognize that this is a reasonable, balanced approach that has the support of the Quebec police association, and more important, victims groups right across the province of Quebec. It should have his complete support.

* * *

LIGHTHOUSES

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, Cape Spear lighthouse is a symbol of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and is an iconic marker of the most easterly point in North America.

The current government has announced plans to sell off or scrap the Cape Spear lighthouse, along with over 1,000 more lighthouses.

At the same time, the government is building a fake lake and a fake landlocked lighthouse for the G8, a loony boondoggle.

I ask the Minister of the Environment responsible for Parks Canada and national historic sites, how could he put a “for sale” sign on Cape Spear lighthouse?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have a question from the Liberal Party about the environment. I was puzzled about why its members rose today, but upon reflection, it is because this is, in fact, the anniversary of the expansion of the Nahanni National Park sixfold by this Conservative government.

Perhaps that is not the real reason. I think the member rises because this is also the day that the order in council creating the Galapagos of the north, the Gwaii Haanas marine reserve, Canada's first marine national park, was finalized two hours ago.

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current government is using the new Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act to offload historical buildings. The wholesale dumping of lighthouses shows a complete disregard for these iconic structures.

Instead of protecting lighthouses, the government is identifying those it considers surplus and is expecting others to take responsibility for them.

The Conservatives have a bottomless pit of money for a fake lighthouse in Ontario, yet they turn their backs on heritage structures in the maritime provinces.

How much money has the government budgeted to help those who will be forced to take over a lighthouse rather than see it fall into a state of disrepair?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that prior to the new Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act, there was no plan in place to protect heritage lighthouses.

This was a piece of legislation that was supported by all parties. What happened to the Liberal Party? It supported the legislation when it came in.

* * *

G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the height of the tourist season, the U.S. just asked its citizens to avoid Toronto. The Toronto Blue Jays, galleries, theatres, and even VIA Rail have been caged up and shut down. All the major Toronto mayoralty candidates have written to the Prime Minister to ask for help.

Yet thousands of small businesses worried about damages are being told to go jump in that fake lake. The government will not compensate Torontonians for property damage caused by the G20 summit. Why will it not do that?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada, as I mentioned before, is not legally bound to pay compensation for losses suffered as a result of international meetings.

Nonetheless, there are precedents whereby compensation has been provided to those impacted by extraordinary security measures. The assessment of all claims will be made in close co-operation with Audit Services Canada.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no money for Canadians in need, but the ShamWow minister is apparently flush with cash.

Highway travellers from Windsor to Toronto have faced shut down rest stops for more than a year. Meanwhile, money is being dumped into outhouses and bathrooms in remote parts of the minister's riding nowhere near the summit site.

The government's G8 and G20 boondoggle is a skid mark on our country's reputation. How much higher must the pile of shenanigans get before we do anything about it?

• (1500)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as part of Canada's economic action plan, we are making investments in infrastructure in every corner of the country.

I want to inform the House about the riding where we are going to be making the biggest investment in infrastructure in Canada. Does he want to know which it is? It is the member's riding. We are building a bridge to Detroit because the member for Essex has

worked hard. We are going to create jobs. We are going to create opportunities, and a lot of those are going to be in the Windsor-Essex region.

* * *

JAZZ AIR

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are quickly approaching the summer season, which is the most heavily travelled quarter of the year. My constituents in Kelowna—Lake Country are very concerned that they will not be able to fly to their holiday destinations because of a potential work stoppage by Jazz Air. I know that our government has played an active role in bringing both sides to the table.

Can the Minister of Labour please update the House on the progress of this labour dispute?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite my active engagement, I am disappointed to report that Jazz Air and pilot negotiations have not resulted in a new agreement. Although no formal strike or lockout notice has been given, our government is taking action to prevent travellers from being stranded.

Yesterday I gave notice of intent to table legislation in the House. Our economy remains fragile, and our priority is to protect Canadians who would be negatively affected by a work stoppage. People like business travellers, communities that rely on tourism, rural Canadians, and families planning summer travel will all be affected.

We encourage the parties to return to the table and settle this matter expeditiously.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for three years, Mohamed Kohail has been incarcerated in Saudi Arabia for a crime that he did not commit. At his initial trial, he was found guilty and sentenced to death, but the supreme council overruled that verdict and ordered a new trial on the basis of irregularities that denied Mohamed a fair and impartial hearing. Nonetheless, Mohamed could yet again face the death penalty.

Will the Prime Minister use the occasion of the G20 summit to ask King Abdallah if Saudi officials will indeed closely monitor the proceedings of the new trial and if Mohamed could at least be released on bail while the second trial is conducted. Could he do the very same for our friend Pavel Kulisek, who is facing the same situation in Mexico?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has pursued and will continue to pursue all avenues to assist Mohamed and Sultan Kohail. Our government has continuously raised this case with Saudi officials. We continue to raise the case of Mr. Kulisek, as well. We are closely engaged with the Mexican government on that file. We take all these cases very seriously.

Business of the House

[Translation]

JOB CREATION

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers expect the government at least to maintain existing jobs. But the Minister of Natural Resources is refusing to invite Shell to negotiate seriously with potential buyers. As for Davie Shipyards, the Conservative member for Lévis—Bellechasse is scaring creditors instead of guaranteeing that this company will have access to government contracts.

How can this government claim to be creating jobs in Quebec when the Shell and Davie Shipyards cases prove it—

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I sympathize with the workers at the refinery in Montreal. I understand that a union committee has been set up to find a buyer for this refinery.

[English]

I know full well that the minister has been working full time on this, and he has been working with both sides. We expect them to come to some resolution on this issue.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this being Thursday, I would like to ask the government House leader about his plans for the period immediately ahead: tonight, tomorrow and until at least Wednesday of next week.

I wonder, in answering the question, if he could indicate exactly how he proposes to dispose of the issue concerning pardons, which was previously known as Bill C-23. I think the House would be anxious to know the plan for bringing that matter to a conclusion where I believe there is agreement.

Finally, could he be a little more precise on the matters pertaining to the industrial dispute in the air travel industry in Canada? The Minister of Labour answered a question during question period and it would be helpful to know if the government House leader has anything further to say.

● (1505)

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, perhaps to deal with the issue that was raised by one of my colleagues, the member for Kelowna—Lake Country, about Jazz Air, the Minister of Labour, who has been working diligently on this file for weeks now and certainly at an intensified rate over the last 48 to 72 hours, has addressed that issue.

As she noted, the government filed a notice that appeared on the order paper this morning, indicating that were there to be a work stoppage that would threaten our communities serviced by Jazz Air, threaten the livelihoods of many Canadians, indeed inconvenience business, threaten the fragile economic recovery that we are seeing in all parts of Canada, but obviously would severely threaten the economic recovery in those parts serviced by that airline, the

government is prepared to act expeditiously to ensure that work stoppage would be of the shortest possible duration.

As for the business of the House, as it is the Thursday question, today we will continue to debate the opposition motion and then later this evening, the business of supply.

In a few minutes, to address the other question that the official opposition House leader asked, I hope to create and complete, at all its remaining stages, Bill C-23A, an act to amend the Criminal Records Act. We will also be adopting, at all stages, Bill C-40, celebrating Canada's seniors.

When the House meets again, we will continue to debate on Bill S-2, the sex offender registry, and Bill S-9, tackling auto theft.

As we near the end of this sitting, I want to thank my colleagues for their co-operation, particularly in these last few weeks. We have had many challenges and I think we have met most of them. Most notably was the challenge of these two five-week sitting blocks. I would point out, however, that anyone who just watched question period would have to draw the conclusion that it truly is silly season here in the House of Commons, given the level of the debate.

However, the challenge being that we had to be absent from our constituents and families, the upside of course was that we as members had the opportunity to spend so much quality time together. Just like any good family visit, unfortunately all good things must come to an end.

I would also like to speak briefly to express my appreciation to the House staff who serve us so well.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Jay Hill: Truly there are good feelings across the aisle here this afternoon. Mr. Speaker, in recognizing you, your staff, Madam Clerk, and all the staff that serve us so well, I would note that sometimes toward the end of these sessions, we see an accelerated rate of activity in trying to complete a lot of government business. I have certainly appreciated that. The staff, as always, has stepped up to the mark and even surpassed it, as usual, in getting the job done for Canadians.

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**BILL C-23—INSTRUCTION TO THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL
SECURITY**

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two motions. The first one is a rather lengthy one. It deals with the new Bill C-23A. My counterparts in all the parties have copies of the proposed motion because it is quite lengthy. I will now table it and ask consent for it to be printed in *Hansard* as if it had been read to the House.

Mr. Speaker, I hope you will find unanimous consent for its adoption.

I move:

Business of the House

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security that it divide Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, into two bills, namely Bill C-23A, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act, and Bill C-23B, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts;

that Bill C-23A be composed of

(a) a clause that sets out the short title as Limiting Pardons for Serious Crimes Act;

(b) clause 9 of Bill C-23, amended

(i) to renumber subsection 4(1) as section 4;

(ii) to amend sections 4 and 4.1 as follows:

Restrictions on application for pardon

4. A person is ineligible to apply for a pardon until the following period has elapsed after the expiry according to law of any sentence, including a sentence of imprisonment, a period of probation and the payment of any fine, imposed for an offence:

(a) 10 years, in the case of a serious personal injury offence within the meaning of section 752 of the Criminal Code, including manslaughter, for which the applicant was sentenced to imprisonment for a period of two years or more or an offence referred to in Schedule 1 that was prosecuted by indictment, or five years in the case of any other offence prosecuted by indictment, an offence referred to in Schedule 1 that is punishable on summary conviction or an offence that is a service offence within the meaning of the National Defence Act for which the offender was punished by a fine of more than two thousand dollars, detention for more than six months, dismissal from Her Majesty's service, imprisonment for more than six months or a punishment that is greater than imprisonment for less than two years in the scale of punishments set out in subsection 139(1) of that Act; or

(b) three years, in the case of an offence, other than one referred to in paragraph (a), that is punishable on summary conviction or that is a service offence within the meaning of the National Defence Act.

Pardon

4.1 (1) The Board may grant a pardon for an offence if the Board is satisfied that

(a) the applicant, during the applicable period referred to in section 4, has been of good conduct and has not been convicted of an offence under an Act of Parliament; and

(b) in the case of an offence referred to in paragraph 4(a), granting the pardon at that time would provide a measurable benefit to the applicant, would sustain his or her rehabilitation in society as a law-abiding citizen and would not bring the administration of justice into disrepute.

Onus on applicant

(2) In the case of an offence referred to in paragraph 4(a), the applicant has the onus of satisfying the Board that the pardon would provide a measurable benefit to the applicant and would sustain his or her rehabilitation in society as a law-abiding citizen.

Factors

(3) In determining whether granting the pardon would bring the administration of justice into disrepute, the Board may consider

(a) the nature, gravity and duration of the offence;

(b) the circumstances surrounding the commission of the offence;

(c) information relating to the applicant's criminal history and, in the case of a service offence within the meaning of the National Defence Act, to any service offence history of the applicant that is relevant to the application; and

(d) any factor that is prescribed by regulation.

(iii) to delete the remainder of clause 9 of Bill C-23;

(c) clause 10 of Bill C-23, amended

(i) to amend section 4.2 by

deleting paragraph (1)(a);

deleting the words "if the applicant is eligible" from paragraph (1)(b);

substituting pardon for record suspension in subsections (1) and (2); and

(ii) to delete the remainder of clause 10 of Bill C-23;

(d) clause 12 of Bill C-23, amended as follows:

Paragraph 5(a) of the Act is replaced by the following:

(a) is evidence of the fact that

(i) the Board, after making inquiries, was satisfied that the applicant for the pardon was of good conduct, and

(ii) the conviction in respect of which the pardon is granted should no longer reflect adversely on the applicant's character; and

(e) clause 15 of Bill C-23, amended

i. to amend subsection 6.3(2) by substituting pardon for record suspension; and

ii. to delete the remainder of subclause 15(1) of Bill C-23;

(f) clause 22 of Bill C-23, amended

i. to delete subclause 22(1) of Bill C-23; and

ii. to delete paragraph 9.1(c.2) in subclause 22(2) of Bill C-23;

(g) clause 24 of Bill C-23, amended to renumber the schedule to the Criminal Records Act as Schedule 2;

(h) a clause that adds to the Criminal Records Act a Schedule 1 having the same content as Schedule 1 in the schedule to Bill C-23;

(i) clause 46 of Bill C-23, amended

(i) to delete the words "as though it were an application for a record suspension"; and

(ii) to replace the reference to subsection 47(1) with a reference to section 47;

(j) clause 47 of Bill C-23, amended

(i) to delete subsection (2); and

(ii) to renumber subsection 47(1) as 47;

that Bill C-23B be composed of

(a) clauses 1 to 23 of Bill C-23;

(b) clause 24 of Bill C-23, amended to provide that Schedule 2 to the Criminal Records Act is replaced by the schedule set out in the schedule to the Bill;

(c) clauses 25 to 48 of Bill C-23; and

(d) a schedule that includes a Schedule 2 having the same content as Schedule 2 in the schedule to Bill C-23;

that Bills C-23A and C-23B be printed;

that, for the purposes of printing Bills C-23A and C-23B, the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections in those bills as may be necessary to give effect to this motion; and that Bill C-23A be deemed to have been reported from the Committee without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

● (1510)

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion that we have not heard?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The Chair has grave reservations about this practice. Given the unanimity, I will let it go ahead, but in my view, there are other ways of doing this that might be easier.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

(Bill C-23A deemed reported from the committee without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed)

The Speaker: The government House leader has a second motion, as I recall.

* * *

CELEBRATING CANADA'S SENIORS ACT

(Bill C-40. On the Order: Government Orders:)

June 16—Bill C-40, An Act to establish National Seniors Day—the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

Points of Order

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do have a second motion dealing with Bill C-40. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-40, An Act to establish National Seniors Day, shall be deemed to have been read a second time, referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

I believe my colleague, the Minister of Public Works, also has a point of order and a motion.

The Speaker: We had better deal with this one first.

Does the government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion in relation to Bill C-40?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, and deemed read the third time and passed)

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I made reference during question period to a document, which I would like to table in both official languages. It is the summary report of the hearings on maternal and child health, sent to me and my colleague the Minister of International Cooperation from the Conservative members of the status of women committee.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister refers to a minority report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. As chair of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, who tabled the report on maternal and infant health yesterday in the House, there is no such thing as a minority report from that committee on that issue. When I tabled it, there was no minority report.

Mr. Speaker, you ruled it out of order when the parliamentary secretary tried to do that earlier on. I do not know what the minister wishes to table, if it is a shopping list or a new list of books she intends to read over the summer, but there is no such thing as a minority report of this committee.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I made reference to the report during question period. I have tabled it with you in both official languages. It is the summary report of the hearings on maternal and child health that was sent to me and my colleague the Minister of International Cooperation by the Conservative members of the status of women committee.

•(1515)

The Speaker: I must advise the House that ministers can table any documents they want in the House. What the minister has tabled is a copy of a letter addressed to another minister, which has attached to it some material which I have not had a chance to read. Ministers can table what they want. It was not tabled, as I heard it, by the minister as a kind of report from a committee. It is a document. I do not know the full contents. But, I believe, ministers can table what they want.

The hon. member for Don Valley West is rising on a point of order.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning the chair of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs tabled a report following a study of the new veterans charter. The report was fine work. It was collaborative among the parties and done by consensus.

However, the tabling of the report included a title page which was not considered by the committee. The Liberal Party would like to register a concern about the title of the report that seems to trivialize the work that we did and the concerns that we had regarding the new veterans charter. The title of the report is "A Timely Tune-up for the Living New Veterans Charter". We think a timely tune-up could be construed by some veterans as not having taken their concerns seriously.

We would like to register this concern. That title was not agreed to. It caught members by surprise today. I am not laying blame on who did it, but I want it recorded that we do have a concern. We would like a neutral title that simply says a review of the new veterans charter.

The Speaker: I am sure the hon. member can raise that issue with the committee and have it dealt with there.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order now that my blood pressure is back down to 120/80. When we hear such egregious dreams coming from the other side, I have to rise on this point of order.

Following a reply to a question, the Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency stated that it was his government that cleaned up the Sydney tar ponds and that our government did nothing. I just want to clarify that in the 2003 budget, \$340 million was appropriated. It was announced in 2004 by a Liberal government. The member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville did a full panel review.

I will give the minister an opportunity to withdraw his statement. What he said today was the equivalent of my paper boy taking credit for the editorial in the *Cape Breton Post*. All he did was come up and make the announcement. We did the work on it. The member for Sydney—Victoria—

Speaker's Ruling

The Speaker: The hon. member knows that disputes as to facts are not points of order as interesting as it might be to argue about them. I know the member can put his question down as a late show and have a debate with the minister or parliamentary secretary on the matter another day. I am sure he would enjoy the debate very much.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As the chair of the veterans affairs committee, I just wanted to assure the House that over a period of almost a year there was work done on the review of the new veterans charter. We passed that in order to ensure it was tabled in the House prior to the House rising because of the importance of the work for veterans. All routine motions were done at the end and the title was left in those routine motions to be covered by the clerk.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE
CANADIAN MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: The Chair is now prepared to make a statement regarding the question of privilege pertaining to documents on the treatment of Afghan detainees in response to interventions by the hon. member for St. John's East, the hon. government House leader, the hon. member for Wascana, the hon. member for Joliette, and the hon. member for Vancouver East.

[Translation]

As hon. members will recall, on April 27, 2010, the Chair provided the House with a detailed ruling on the questions of privilege raised concerning the Order of the House of December 10, 2009, pertaining to documents on the treatment of Afghan detainees. Having carefully considered all sides of this complex issue, I made the determination that there was, in fact, a *prima facie* question of privilege related to the failure of the government to produce the documents as required by the House Order.

• (1520)

[English]

However, rather than immediately proceeding to the next step for dealing with a question of privilege, as is normally the case, that is allowing a member to move a motion related to the matter, I opted to defer such action in favour of giving all parties two weeks to work together to reach a compromise.

On Tuesday, May 11, following a request from all parties, an extension to Friday, May 14 was granted.

[Translation]

On May 14, the Minister of Justice announced that an agreement in principle had been reached between the parties and proceeded to table the agreement. In doing so he stated:

All parties agree that the details of this proposal will be further outlined in a memorandum of understanding signed by all party leaders.

Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to table that, in both official languages, and indicate to you that it is the agreement between the members that the memorandum of understanding would be in place by May 31, 2010.

This can be found in *Debates*, p. 2848.

[English]

On May 31, the Minister of Justice again rose in the House, this time to indicate that more time was required to finalize the memorandum of understanding. No date was given for the completion of discussions or for the tabling of a signed final document.

On June 15, the government House leader made a statement indicating that the government, together with the official opposition and the Bloc Québécois, had arrived at an agreement. Yesterday, that agreement, duly signed by the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Bloc Québécois, was tabled in the House by the government House leader.

[Translation]

When, on April 27, 2010, the Chair enjoined the parties to find a solution to the impasse in which the House found itself at that time, I stated: "...the Chair believes that the House ought to make one further effort to arrive at an interest-based solution...."

[English]

Later, in the same ruling, I expressed my hope for a compromise which prompted me to grant members additional time in which to find a resolution to the imbroglio.

The memorandum of understanding tabled by the government House leader makes it apparent to the Chair that a resolution has indeed been found. A consensus has been reached between the government and two of the opposition parties. The Chair notes, in particular and most significantly, that the party whose motion gave rise to the House order of December 10, 2009, is a signatory to the agreement.

In considering this matter, the Chair has taken great care to assess whether the existence of this consensus satisfies the broad conditions that were imposed on the parties in the ruling of April 27.

I must stress that it is not for the Chair to examine the details of the agreement or to compare it to the agreement in principle tabled on May 14. I am responding to the interventions that have been made on behalf of an overwhelming majority of members who have stated that they are satisfied with the consensus agreement that has been tabled.

The Chair can only conclude, therefore, that the requirements of the ruling of April 27, 2010, have indeed been met and, accordingly, I will not call on the hon. member for St. John's East to move a motion at this time.

[Translation]

Instead, the Chair will allow time for the processes and mechanisms described in the agreement to be implemented. Should circumstances change, members will no doubt ensure that the Chair will again be seized of the matter, but for now I will consider the matter closed.

[English]

I wish to thank the parties for taking the time required to arrive at this understanding, which is in keeping with the best traditions of this place, and I thank the House for its attention.

Speaker's Ruling

[Translation]

I have another ruling.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDERSTANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND
ESTIMATES—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on June 10, 2010 by the hon. member for Mississauga South concerning the admissibility of a third report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates which was presented to the House earlier that day.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the member for Mississauga South for bringing this matter to the attention of the House and the member for Eglinton—Lawrence for his comments.

[English]

In his remarks, the member for Mississauga South explained that the subject matter of the third report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates was based on a study of claims that the member for Scarborough—Rouge River was actively lobbying the Government of Canada while sitting as a member of Parliament. He argued that the authority to look into any claims related to the Conflict of Interest Code or the conduct of members of Parliament lay with the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(a)(viii) and not the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

He claimed that the committee had strayed beyond its mandate and that the report was therefore out of order.

The member also complained that the dissenting opinion to the report, which he understood had been submitted by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, had not been appended to the report and so rendered the report incomplete.

Let me deal with this matter immediately. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a) such appendices to reports must be proposed by committee members only. As the member for Scarborough—Rouge River is not a member of the committee, his dissenting opinion could not be appended to the report. This in no way invalidates the report nor does it render it incomplete.

• (1525)

[Translation]

Now, let us turn to what I see as the central question the Chair faces: whether the report in question is procedurally invalid by virtue of the committee having undertaken to study and report on a matter that is beyond its mandate as prescribed by the House.

That committees are empowered to deal with issues delegated to it by the House is indisputable. As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition, states at page 985:

Like all other powers of standing committees, the power to report is limited to issues that fall within their mandate or that have been specifically assigned to them by the House. Every report must identify the authority under which it is presented.

[English]

The member for Eglinton—Lawrence was correct when he stated that even though committees are masters of their own agenda and they can do what they wish, they have been created by the House and must reflect the intent of the House in carrying out their work.

Limitations on committees are again spelled out in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, which states at page 1048:

These freedoms are not, however, total or absolute. First, it is useful to bear in mind that committees are creatures of the House. This means that they have no independent existence and are not permitted to take action unless they have been authorized/empowered to do so by the House.

It continues to read:

...committees are free to organize their proceedings as they see fit provided that their studies and the motions and reports they adopt comply with the orders of reference and instructions issued by the House.

The text further emphasizes that orders of reference, instructions, the standing orders and rulings by the Speaker take precedence over any rules a committee may adopt.

In other words, while the actual decision to proceed with a study may be taken according to established committee procedures, the fact remains that no committee can simply usurp the powers of another. Rather, a committee must seek the authority from the House to widen an order of reference. Beauchesne's 6th edition, on page 233, citation 831(3) states:

When it has been thought desirable to do so, the House has enlarged the Order of Reference of a committee by means of an instruction.

[Translation]

Objections to committees acting beyond their mandate are nothing new. For example, on May 15, 2008—see debates, page 5924—during the 39th Parliament, the Chair determined that the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics went beyond the committee's mandate and thus was out of order. An identical conclusion was reached in relation to the second report of the Standing Committee on Finance when I ruled that report out of order on April 2, 2009—see debates, pages 2301-2.

In that ruling, I acknowledged that

...the House has taken great care to define and differentiate the responsibilities of its committees, particularly where there might at first glance appear to be overlapping jurisdictions.

In the case before us, I have carefully reviewed Standing Order 108 (3)(c), which delineates the powers of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

[English]

It is clear to the Chair that the House did not grant that committee the authority to study issues related to lobbying. The member for Mississauga South is right in his assertion that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(a)(viii), has been given the necessary authority to look into any claims related to the Conflict of Interest Code or the Conduct of Members of Parliament. Authority for considering other issues related to lobbying have been conferred upon the Standing Committee on Information, Privacy and Ethics, including examination of reports from the Commissioner of Lobbying.

Therefore, for those reasons I must conclude that the third report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates is out of order. Accordingly, I rule that the report be deemed withdrawn. Furthermore, with regard to the motion on the order paper standing in the name of the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre, I am ordering that this motion for concurrence in the third report be deemed withdrawn and that no further proceedings may take place in relation to this report.

In conjunction with this, I will reiterate an important message contained in my ruling on April 2, 2009, when I stated:

While it is true that the House has given its committees broad mandates and significant powers, with such power and authority comes the responsibility of committees to respect their mandates and not exceed the limits of their authority.

• (1530)

[Translation]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

First, I would like to apologize for almost interrupting you earlier when you were beginning to read your second ruling.

On behalf of the chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, the member for Don Valley East, I request the unanimous consent of the House for permission to table a report from this committee.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord have the unanimous consent of the House to table this report?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study of the financing of renewable energy projects by the government.

By this report, the committee wants to draw the attention of the House to a potential breach of its privilege and/or a possible case of contempt of Parliament and recommends that it take the measures it deems appropriate.

Business of Supply

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PROROGATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: When the matter was last before the House, the hon. member for York West had the floor and there are three minutes remaining in the time allotted for her remarks. I therefore call upon the hon. member for York West.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to get on with the work of the day.

When the minister emerged from his caucus meeting yesterday, brows furrowed and fists clenched, his language indicated a need for a crisis. My approach, which I think is the Liberal approach, would have been one of thoughtful consideration rather than a crisis triage.

While it seems as though the government enjoys a crisis, I fear that passing legislation without thinking about the real consequences is irresponsible, dangerous and ill-advised. The worst part is that it is totally unnecessary.

We could have used those extra 63 days that the government stripped away. We could have looked at the bill and there would have been no need to split anything. We could have passed a comprehensive bill dealing with the issue once and for all. Instead, we are solving problems piecemeal, one piece at a time. That is the result of a government that practices short-term politics without considering the larger issues and consequences of its actions, as clearly we have seen with regard to the G8 and G20 summits. That is the difference between the Conservative government and its Liberal predecessor.

I will stand today and vote in favour of the motion because I have no alternative. Every time a new scandal befalls the government, we face the threat of another period of prorogation.

Most recently, the current Minister of Veterans Affairs was accused by the former minister of veterans affairs of political interference and of using the public purse for partisan gains in New Brunswick. As this issue continues to develop, can we expect that the Prime Minister will pull the plug and hide the truth? I will bet he is very glad that today the House is adjourning.

The Prime Minister's abuses of power must be curtailed. The government cannot be permitted to continue to disregard the long-term consequences of its actions. The Liberal motion would do just that, while still permitting the leader of the government to use certain traditional management measures.

In essence, the Prime Minister has shown by his actions that he is not capable of acting in a responsible manner. The House, not unlike the parent of a difficult child, now must take corrective action to ensure that the inappropriate behaviour stops once and for all.

I will be voting to support this motion and I would encourage all responsible parliamentarians to do the very same thing.

Business of Supply

● (1535)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague said that she supports this motion which calls for the formation of another special committee to study prorogation.

She should be aware that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs has been studying this issue for the last number of months. It has already heard from many witnesses, experts and constitutional scholars who have warned us to be cautious in making any changes. In fact, they are urging us not to make changes. Many of them have spoken out against imposing new rules.

The real question for me is why my colleague would not trust the work of her colleagues who serve on the procedure and House affairs committee. The deputy whip, the whip and the deputy House leader all serve on that committee. Is she indicating that she does not trust the work of the procedure and House affairs committee, which is already studying this issue, and particularly the three members from her own caucus who serve on that committee?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, I am certainly not second-guessing the hon. member's intent or the work that is being done on that important committee.

We need to look at it in the broader sense. We are functioning under rules that have been in place for a very long time. Up until now they have worked quite well. Broadening the debate on other issues, such as shutting down committees, the issue of who appears before committees, whether it is a minister or his or her staff, maybe it is time to look at a few of those rules. All people are accountable no matter who they are, whether they are the ministers' staff or PMO staff. Their having to run around trying to avoid being served summonses does not do well for Parliament as a whole.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will go further than my colleague did a minute ago.

We just heard an answer that suggests amending today's motion again. Earlier this morning the Liberals had to scramble around and amend their motion so that it might fit something they are trying to do, because how it was originally written did not work. Now the member wants to expand it further to include an examination of how committees can call witnesses.

As my colleague has already said, we have had up to 16 witnesses at the procedure and House affairs committee, many of them scholars on constitutional law and prorogation.

Could she tell us how she disagrees with Professor Russell, Professor Pelletier, Professor Mendes or Professor Franks and all the information that they have shared with the procedure and House affairs committee on how to deal with prorogation? Could she tell us why she disagrees with her own whip, deputy whip and deputy House leader and the hard work they have been doing on that committee?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, what I disagree with is the abuse of prorogation. Prorogation was supposed to be used for when a government's agenda had run out. Clearly, the Prime Minister has used prorogation as an opportunity to run away from the difficult issues that he was facing.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the Liberal Party for its motion today on this opposition day. However, with praise comes criticism. I am in complete agreement with the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Furthermore, as the deputy chair of that same committee, when I read this motion I wondered what difference another special committee would make to the whole issue of prorogation.

At the Liberals' suggestion, we have been studying this issue in committee for a number of weeks. We have heard 16 witnesses: academics, select and well-known people. We are in the last hours of this parliamentary session, but I am convinced, if it is the will of the committee—committees are masters of their own proceedings—that a report on prorogation will be prepared by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The subject is interesting but the suggestion of establishing a special committee does not strike me as being the right approach. Once again, the Liberals are masters of their own proceedings and they must make their own decisions.

As for prorogation, I would point out that the Conservatives have indeed used this parliamentary tool excessively, specifically, twice in the past two years, once at the end of 2008 and again at the end of 2009. Furthermore, it is becoming clear that the Conservative Prime Minister uses prorogation as soon as things heat up or get out of hand, as soon as he thinks his minority could be overturned.

Two events in particular have convinced me. I would remind the House of the coalition talks that were taking place at the end of 2008. It would have been a coalition between the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party, supported by the Bloc. Incidentally, I want to set the record straight: the Bloc was not part of the coalition; it merely supported the Liberal-NDP coalition.

What was the Prime Minister's reaction? Instead of facing a vote of confidence on his lack of leadership, he suddenly decided to use prorogation. That was the first event. A year later, almost to the day, this government felt caught in a ever-tightening vise, and did not want to face the consequences of the fact that it knew about the allegations of torture in Afghan prisons and that it had clearly violated various international conventions, including the Geneva convention. This government refused to hand over documents and once again refused to face the music, so it decided to use prorogation again on December 30, 2009. What is interesting is that it announced prorogation the very next day on all the television and radio stations, and in all the newspapers.

Business of Supply

● (1540)

As we all know, December 30 is the day before New Year's Eve and all of its festivities in Quebec and Canada. Let us look at what the Conservative government did on December 30, when the public was busy preparing for their New Year's Eve parties, doing their shopping or calling family members to make sure everyone would be there to ring in the New Year. On December 30, like hypocrites, the Conservatives prorogued Parliament yet again.

Who was the spokesperson we saw all over the news? Dimitri Soudas. He was a press secretary at the time; his work had not yet gotten him promoted to the Prime Minister's communications director. This is the same Dimitri Soudas who is literally hiding and refuses to account for his decisions before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, where my colleague from Châteauguay—Saint-Constant does an excellent job on behalf of the Bloc Québécois. All of the committee members do a good job, except the Conservatives.

Dimitri Soudas is hiding and refuses to face the music. A bailiff has tried to serve him with an order to appear—a subpoena—before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, but he is nowhere to be found. He is somewhere in the Langevin Building, on the other side of Wellington. The bailiff knows he is there, but he is well hidden. They make calls to see if he is there, and he is, but he refuses to come out for his subpoena. In Ontario, subpoenas must be delivered by hand, but that is not the case in Quebec, where an adult can sign the acknowledgment of receipt for the subpoena.

This same Dimitri Soudas was not hiding on December 30. He was proud to announce prorogation on behalf of the Prime Minister. We must not forget the real reason for the prorogation. The Conservatives did not want to face the music and release the secret Afghan detainee documents. The Speaker had to issue a ruling to force the parties to negotiate an agreement, which was reached after seven weeks of negotiations. The process was difficult, but three parties came to an agreement. The NDP decided not to participate, and too bad for them. They will not have access to any documents and will not see any documents.

What does the Conservative government do when it feels threatened, when it feels that it could lose power or that the opposition agrees on certain principles? The opposition parties have different view, and that is the beauty of democracy. We have different opinions, but we can agree on principles. Democracy, openness and transparency are principles the opposition parties share, despite their differences. I do not expect the Liberals to like me as a parliamentarian, but I do expect them to respect me. That is the difference. These are matters of principle on which we have agreed.

When the Conservatives were in opposition in the days of the Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien governments, they used to brag. I have been a member of the House since 1993. The Reformers, who became Alliance members, then Conservatives, used to say they were the champions of transparency, the Mr. Cleans of transparency. But the Conservative government excels at hiding things and being hypocritical.

● (1545)

That is why we think this is a good topic, even though the motion was the wrong vehicle for raising it. The rules on prorogation need to be tightened so that prorogation is not used willy-nilly, for every possible reason. The only way to do that is to develop mechanisms that would prevent the Prime Minister from doing whatever he wants. We have to set guidelines. That is all I have to say for the time being.

● (1550)

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague. I could not help but observe his energy, his passion and his enthusiasm. I only wish he would show that same kind of passion, energy and enthusiasm for our great country of Canada.

It would have been good if he could have focused, at least for 10% of his speech, on the actual motion. He started talking about prorogation, and he used the word once or twice during his speech.

However, does he agree with the motion that is before us? The motion asks that a special committee of the House be established to study the issue of prorogation? The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs has studied this motion for months and has heard from 16 witnesses.

Does he agree that we need another committee, possibly chaired by a Liberal, if the Liberals get their way, to study this issue again?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Madam Speaker, my colleague just talked about my passion for Quebec and said that I should show the same kind of passion and love for Canada. I know I am going to disappoint him. My loyalty is to Quebec, Quebecers and the regions of Quebec. I want to tell my colleagues in the House that regardless of their party or region, they were elected democratically. People have no choice but to accept the democratic results of an election.

I feel that every member of every party here was legitimately elected. I know that my colleague did not question my legitimacy, but he said I should show the same kind of passion for Canada as for Quebec. I do not know whether my colleague realizes it, but I am a sovereignist; I want out of Canada. When Quebecers say yes to sovereignty, we will form a country. We have nothing against the rest of Canada; we will always be neighbours. I want to tell my colleague that being a sovereignist does not mean being anti-Canada; it means being pro-Quebec.

That was my response to my colleague's opening comments. As for the Liberal motion, it is not worded the way I would have liked it to be. It could result in the creation of another special committee. If the motion is adopted and implemented by the government, we could compare what we did at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Business of Supply

It seems clear to me that the members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs spent a lot of meetings talking about this issue and heard from a lot of witnesses. If this motion is passed, and if the government agrees to form a special committee, the documents and witness statements will be transferred. I hope that the committee will not have to hear from the witnesses again.

That being said, the Bloc Québécois members support our Liberal colleagues' motion as amended.

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to comment on two things. First, let us take a look at the prorogation in this sense and what has been complained about in the past. Would the member reiterate what he said? It seems somewhat opportunistic on the surface to delay the functioning of Parliament for the sake of the government getting out of a tight squeeze. However, in doing so, 37 pieces of legislation were dropped from the order paper, legislation the Conservatives felt were sacrosanct to their philosophy and their ideology to proceed within the House of Commons.

The Conservatives seemed to have wrapped themselves in a catch-22. They have wrapped themselves in this political pretzel. Could the hon. member comment on that? The element of this separate committee raises the bar by which we can deal with the situation of prorogation, which the majority in the House feels has been abused by the government.

• (1555)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Newfoundland for refreshing my memory because that is something I wanted to mention.

Before the last prorogation, the House was supposed to resume business on January 25. Because of the prorogation, we did not get back to work until March 5. At that time, we were in the middle of an economic crisis with job losses and cuts.

I believe that my colleague is from the Grand Falls region. I worked for Abitibi-Price. There was a plant in Grand Falls that I visited several times. It closed its doors. There were unbelievable cuts in Canada's pulp and paper industry, but especially in Quebec, and Parliament was not sitting.

We were supposed to come back to work on January 25. We were ready to work, to do our jobs, but the Prime Minister decided on a lock-out. We were locked out. The boss closed up shop on December 30 even though we were ready to work. We could have been productive, passed bills, dealt with the economic crisis and the job losses affecting individuals and families. Women and children are still suffering from the effect of this crisis because the government did not want to do the responsible thing and resume Parliament on January 25.

Mr. Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question along the same lines. As usual, he delivered an extraordinary speech. He even managed to remind us—it may not have been necessary because we already know how he feels—of his faith in sovereignty.

As I was saying, my question is along the same lines. With regard to the economy, the government told us that it had to prorogue Parliament so that it could recalibrate its economic recovery plan. However, prorogation delayed passage of the budget. Every bill that could have helped employees and employers, businesses or the unemployed died on the order paper. We had to start the entire legislative process all over again.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the Conservatives' argument that prorogation was for the good of economic recovery.

Mr. Michel Guimond: Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate my young colleague from Repentigny—the youngest member of this House, who fulfills his duties admirably—on his earnestness and credibility.

He is quite right on one point: a government speaks through its laws and motions, just as a municipal council speaks through its resolutions and bylaws.

The main purpose of a Parliament is to pass legislation. It is the democratic legislative entity par excellence. The government says it has worked very hard, but its work consisted of putting up a smoke screen. I do not know if it is because I am party whip, but I received a rather thick tome showing all the travels of ministers during prorogation. Maybe all members received this document, which would have us believe that while they were not in Parliament, the Conservatives were on the ground and working hard, making all their partisan announcements. They refuse to invite opposition members when they make such announcements, because they are afraid of seeing them.

I encourage all members of this House, when the Conservatives make announcements in their ridings, to attend those events—through their connections to journalists—and to crash their party, given that they refuse to invite us democratically.

I have several complaints to make about the Liberals. I have been a member of this House since 1993, and as I recall, Liberal ministers usually invited us when they were making announcements, and I hope they will continue to do so if they return to power. At the time, at an event at the Quebec City airport, David Collenette even invited me to speak first. Now that is democracy. We knew that the Conservatives had problems, but now we have proof that they have problems with democracy.

• (1600)

[English]

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am dividing my time with the member for Vancouver Centre.

Prorogation can be mostly for benign reasons but in this case it was not. Done arbitrarily and out of the government's own convenience, it was done to shut down voices that the government did not want to hear. That may be very human, but for a democratic society, for Canada, it is a big problem.

The Prime Minister does not like a lot of different voices, not in his caucus, not in his cabinet, not in committees, not in the bureaucracy, not in media, not anywhere.

During his now more than four years in office, think of any big public discussion his government has generated on the transforming issues of today and of the future, on the changing national and international economy, on global security, on climate change, on energy, on anything. Nothing. The Prime Minister does not like other voices. Other voices might be critical, embarrassing or inconvenient. They may simply be different from his own. He knows where he wants to go. He thinks he is right. So why do these voices matter?

Prorogation was just part of it. In his more than four years as Prime Minister, he has used and misused the power of his position, its rewards and punishments to entice an intimidate, to play on human weakness, to prop up voices he wants to hear and to shut down those he does not want to hear. All this may be very human, but for democratic society, for Canada, it is a big problem.

This past Monday we brought together about 20 community groups from across the country, some national and international and some small and local, that after years and sometimes decades of receiving federal government money to do important community services and to give voice to those who are less advantaged, to help them to live the way all Canadians should live, they had their funding cut. These were aboriginal groups, health groups, women's groups, learning and child care, international aid groups and others. However, this round table was not really about their funding cuts. It was about what the loss of the services and the voice they provided means to their communities and to Canada.

These cuts, this different understanding of the importance of public voice, represent a great change from previous governments, from the Liberal governments of 1970s and early 1980s, from the Progressive Conservative governments of the late 1980s and early 1990s and from the Liberal governments again until 2006.

When I was minister of social development, my responsibilities included those for seniors, people with disabilities, the volunteer sector as a whole and child care. People who worked for advocacy groups on these issues did so because they believed in these issues and knew that so much more needed to be done. These groups pushed hard. We got to know each other, maybe even trust each other a little, but these groups were intensely politically no-partisan and intensely issue partisan.

They had to deal with whoever was the government. At times they drove me crazy. Sometimes they were too right, uncomfortably right when it was not sure that I could deliver that right. Sometimes I thought they were completely wrong, that to meet their own goals and mine they wanted to go down the wrong path.

However, I knew what every party for decades had known, which is that these voices are part of the essential mix of voices necessary for a properly functioning healthy society.

Then in 2006 the Conservatives won. During the first three or four months there were signs of trouble for these groups but to them they hoped it was just a matter of getting used to a new government and a new government getting used to them. They had seen it before, whether a Liberal or Progressive Conservative government, and eventually they knew they would get through to that government and everything would end up roughly as it was. However, not this time.

Business of Supply

There were cuts to the court challenges program, women's groups, literacy and child care, and aboriginal groups. The first groups in these areas thought they were the only ones affected. They kept waiting for the train to arrive at the station but I would tell them that the train was not coming.

● (1605)

The Conservative government thinks differently. It does not know why it should give money to these groups. It thinks it is its job to reflect the different voices in the country. It believes that if these issues had any real public support, people would give to these groups themselves. It believes that if any money does go to these groups, it should go directly to the people in need, to feet on the ground, not to mouths in corner offices. It cannot understand why any government in its right mind would support someone who just criticizes it anyway.

All this might be very human, but for a democratic country, for Canada, it is a big problem.

We all knew and the government knew what would happen next. For these groups, their effectiveness, their voices and their existences threatened, they would go nuts. Instead, most have gone quiet.

I think this even surprised the government at first, then it realized the power it had. Essentially it said to these groups, "You thought you were strong. You are not. You need our money and now you have a choice. You can go quiet and maybe get some money, but not likely and certainly a lot less, and by going quiet, you become powerless, or you can go loud and certainly not get any money and become powerless. What do you want, to be powerless or powerless?"

For the government it meant that it could keep its money and keep these groups quiet. Life does not get much better.

On Monday, together some of these groups told their story. Many others are still not willing to. There was also someone who took part but who decided to do so only by phone because a government contract was pending for a group she would like to work for and she did not feel that she could put herself or this group at risk by being identified. This is a person who has a reputation for fighting every fight, loudly, publicly and never taking a backward step. It is all about shutting down voices.

Another group, whose funding has not been cut, had intended to be there to show solidarity with the other groups because this group knows that but for the grace of one cabinet minister who has a personal interest in the issue that is its focus, its funding might be cut too. In the end, however, the group decided that it could not risk being there. In one way or another, again, it is shutting down voices.

Business of Supply

The round table was not about groups losing their funding. It was about what the loss of funding means, what the loss of services and the voices that they provide means to local communities and the national community, and what it means to all of us.

Here is what some of them said. One said, "I am acutely aware that—today—there may be consequences associated with speaking publicly about social and political issues of importance to Canadians. ...few would deny that the "chill" is real and that this is a new development in Canadian democracy".

Another person talked about organizations that are now afraid to be visible in a press conference and about groups that historically have had too few resources to act alone. The person said that they were divided by fear, divided by a race to survive financially. The person said that the result was distrust, fear and a lack of cohesiveness.

Another person said, "We are witnessing some of the most prominent organizations in this country being silenced, reduced. ...ensuring that the government will have little or no opposition to their actions and policy." "We are witnessing some of the most prominent organizations in this country being silenced, reduced, ensuring that the government will have little or no opposition to their actions and policy. It seems that NGOs have been given two choices—stay quiet and don't represent the challenges facing vulnerable Canadians or voice those issues and quietly disappear".

Those words do not convey their full stories nor the tone of their voices. Their tone was one of sadness, anger, disappointment in themselves for being so weak in the face of their organization's survival, for turning against other groups, for turning selfish and greedy, for being so unlike what they ever thought they were. More than that, their tone was that of disbelief and denial. They could not believe this was happening. They could not believe it was possible to stop themselves before they could say what needed to be said. This was not Canada.

These groups knew their own stories and knew the stories of those in their own sectors but they were stunned by the other voices they heard and by how broad and how deep the problem went. I think it took so long for these groups to speak out because of this disbelief, because of a feeling that surely they were the only ones, that no one else would understand, and because to say something about losing their funding would sound to others like sour grapes and would sound self-serving, as if they really did not have the right to say something.

• (1610)

It is the same story for all the opposition political parties and for the media. We are losing our voice, but what right do we have to say something? It is called sour grapes and self-serving.

This is not, first of all, most of all, about us. It is about the public, about Canadians, and about how this country works. That gives us a right. That gives us an obligation.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his very passionate speech. He went on at length and was very passionate about his subject matter. Unfortunately, it had nothing to do with the motion we are here debating today.

I do not know if prorogation was mentioned in the beginning of it, but he really did go on. Certainly, as an opposition member will, he criticized the government for things we stand for and for things we have done. We will even forgive him that. It is his prerogative to not speak to his own party's motion, because that certainly proves to us how important it truly is to the Liberals.

However, I will ask him about the importance of the hard work of members of the House and the hard work of members of the committee on procedure and House affairs. I will ask why he believes that a further study or a different study from the months-long study the committee has undertaken is necessary.

Members of his own party, his own whip, his own deputy whip, and his own deputy House leader sit on that committee. I happen to chair it. We have worked reasonably hard toward an answer, and in a very collegial way. At any time, at any place, members can certainly bring forward changes to our direction, what we are looking at, and what rules we are following. We are very free on the time allotment, whether for opposition or government members. I try to make friends rather than enemies. I would much rather hug than present a fist.

I would like to ask him why he thinks the work of those members, including the members from his party, has so little value.

Hon. Ken Dryden: Madam Speaker, as I said in my initial remarks, the prorogation was a shutting down of voices. That is what it fundamentally was.

Prorogation can be used for lots of different purposes, but one of its purposes, surely, is not just for the convenience of the government to decide to shut down voices. It is too much of a central theme, a central attitude, and a central way of doing things by the government. It shuts down voices that it does not want to hear. Whenever it does not want to hear them, it just shuts them down. Prorogation is just part of the same thing.

In terms of the hon. member's question about the work of the committee, I am sure that the committee has worked hard. The fact is that prorogation as it now exists allows for the possibility of the shutting down of Parliament and the shutting down of voices at absolutely inappropriate and unworthy times. Unless and until we get prorogation right, we open ourselves to these kinds of abuses in the future.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his presentation today on the motion.

The fact of the matter, trying to be charitable and nice here, is that the Liberals went to bed last night thinking that their opposition day motion was going to be about MS, on which they did a very good job two or three days ago in the House during a take note debate. Some time this morning, at 8:30, somebody and their management changed the agenda and brought in the prorogation motion, which they had to amend.

It has put them on the defensive. I can appreciate the difficulties they have trying to defend this actual motion, which they do not even really want to talk about, so they talk around the issue. It has caused them a lot of problems.

I agree with the hon. member's point about how the government has acted and how it should not be proceeding. It should not be bringing in prorogation every time it needs a way out.

• (1615)

Hon. Ken Dryden: Madam Speaker, however the process worked or did not work to the satisfaction of the member in terms of how we came to present this motion, I think that the essence of the question is the functioning of the current government and how prorogation can be misused to shut down voices.

I would not be so distracted as that member is. I think that is an absolutely central question for all of us, the shutting down of voices.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to speak very strongly in support of this motion, which, in essence, speaks to establishing a committee with the powers of a standing committee so that it could look at all of the issues pertaining to prorogation. It further goes on to elaborate on those issues and expands on what this committee would do.

I support it because, currently, as many of the hon. members rightly said, there is a special committee of the procedure and House affairs committee that is doing this, but this is an arm of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

What I am suggesting here is that this is a tool, in effect. As one of my hon. members said earlier on, the motion is raising the bar. It is asking for a committee in its own right, with all the powers of a standing committee, to study this issue in its entirety. The powers of a standing committee give the committee a very special ability to report directly to this House and to do certain things that special committees and subcommittees cannot do. What it really is trying to do is strengthen the teeth of a committee as it does its work. The question really is, at the end of the day, about a study on prorogation.

A lot of people seem to think that picking up a thread and moving it logically through from prorogation to silencing of voices is reaching. It is not, actually. It is a fairly logical progression, because this is really all about the abuse of power and the abuse of a particular tradition of power called prorogation.

Of course, this power was used by the monarchy, historically, to shut down or shut up Parliament. Historically, Parliament sat only at the whim and at the behest of the sovereign. If the sovereign thought that Parliament was getting in his way—and in those days it was a “his”; the only time Queen Elizabeth ever prorogued Parliament was when there was a plague, which was a valid reason—prorogation was a way of shutting up all those little niggling voices that tended to get in the way of the monarch and his absolute power.

When a prime minister abuses this power of shutting down Parliament and shutting up the voices of duly elected parliamentarians, there is a sense that it is because, like the old monarchs of the day, he or she does not like what they have to say. They are getting in the way. They are really becoming a nuisance, and the prime minister just wants to keep them out of the way. That in itself is arrogance, as if this country is now ruled by a single monarch.

I might tell members that the Tudors used to make frequent use of prorogation as a means of controlling Parliament. Does that sound familiar? Henry V considered Parliament to be little more than a necessary rubber stamp. He used his powers of prorogation to call

elected officials together just long enough to get what he wanted out of them. He would send them off again if he did not like what they had to say.

In the times of Oliver Cromwell, prorogation continued to be a favourite tool for trying to keep Parliament subservient to the Crown.

Well, the Prime Minister and the government of this country are not the Crown. To try to keep Parliament subservient to the Crown and shut it up is not an appropriate use of the power of prorogation.

Today, prorogation has actually evolved and is now traditionally used to allow a government, when it has done all of its work, to recast its plans and agenda and set a new course for the future, as has been done in the past. All of the bills have been passed. All of the committees have finished their work.

The use of prorogation in both instances by the current Prime Minister actually stopped the important work of committees. It stopped important bills that were in the House. It took them off, and they had to be resurrected again and again, twice in a row.

That in itself seems to give, again, a sense that the Prime Minister is saying, “I am a monarch. I do not like what you are saying. You are getting in my way, and you are raising things that I do not wish to discuss.” That is one of the reasons the last hon. member spoke about silencing. It is a method that is now being reused by our Prime Minister as a means of shutting down and shutting up parliamentarians who have been duly elected.

If we recognize that the current government has a tendency to shut up anything it does not like, we can take that and move it a little further, to one of the actual arms of Parliament, the standing committees of Parliament.

• (1620)

We can extrapolate and move on to say that if the Prime Minister does not like what standing committees are doing, they will be shut down as well, because, actually, they are in the way, he does not like their recommendations, does not like their witnesses, and does not like their processes. The Prime Minister, by saying that he does not like those things, is basically shutting down, filibustering, and creating problems for committees in doing their work.

I want to draw attention to something that happened in the House today that is another way of showing disrespect to the House. Very clearly, there are rules for a committee in tabling its reports. If there is a dissenting report, the committee actually presents it under the clear motion of rules on the number of pages, the font, and the timeline. When that does not happen and the committee actually tables its report, it will not have that dissenting report there. If it is done according to the rules, the dissenting report is tabled in the House.

Business of Supply

Today we saw two attempts, one successful, because it was the minister's, to actually go over those rules and find a way to get that dissenting report, by hook or by crook, onto the table. That, of course, occurred because the minister was able to do it. However, it shows a fundamental disrespect for the rules of the House for standing committees of Parliament. In fact, I wonder why we want a standing committee to look at prorogation, because it is obviously going to be equally disrespected. Anything it tries to do will be equally silenced.

When we talk about taking that logical thread and moving from silencing the House and silencing parliamentary committees of the House, we can take one further step. We can see how ministers of the Crown use their power to assist ordinary Canadians and civil society in the things they need to be assisted with, through programs and policies, by tying to it that same silencing. If people do not like what Conservatives say, if they dare to criticize, they will be shut up, because the committee will be disbanded.

I know that there are many groups and NGOs currently that not only do not dare open their mouths but that no longer have a little office or a phone or a computer to send out emails to say what they feel is wrong about the whole issue.

Last year I asked a question of the Minister of Canadian Heritage in the House about the arts communities in Vancouver. It was coming up to the summer, and they should have had their money for putting on their festivals, and they had not even heard from the minister. When those NGOs asked me to bring this question to the House, they actually were so frightened that I would use their names that they said to please just call them "a group of". They asked that I not use their names, because they said that they would not be able to get the funding at all.

We see the shutting down of many women's organizations. They are refused funding, as we have seen happening, because they dared to criticize, because they dared to speak out. Again, it is the same thread that moves from shutting up Parliament, shutting up things the Conservatives do not like said, shutting up committees, and then using one's powers as a minister or as the government to shut up people who they do not think will vote for them, who do not like them, and who dare to criticize them.

There was a meeting here of many women in January. It was interesting, because the women all said that they were so pleased to be able to come together in this place and speak and meet with ministers, as they had been accustomed to doing under the Liberal government and under the Progressive Conservative government. They laughingly said that the problem is that they at least knew in those days that they could criticize government, and no one can criticize government anymore. No one is able to speak out against anything the government does, because they are afraid.

This is again a method of shutting down, shutting up, and silencing, which is what prorogation was originally set up to do. I guess that one can suggest that the government and the Prime Minister are trying to prorogue Canada and the citizens of Canada. Unfortunately, they are unable to do that, and unfortunately, the Prime Minister is not yet a monarch. We see that there is push-back. This motion is about push-back.

This motion is about putting teeth into a process, into a committee structure, that will find a way to take away from the Prime Minister the power that he has shown himself able to abuse so readily.

• (1625)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the opposition members are really embarrassed about this motion that they have put forward. In fact they have been droning on now for hours. It reminds me a little of the vuvuzela, that great instrument that South African soccer fans are using. Members are just droning on and on and wandering off into other topics.

The procedure and House affairs committee has heard from a number of scholars, 16 witnesses, but Professor Weinstock said, "I think we ought to be wary of quick fixes, of magic bullets that will solve this problem once and for all, and certainly of ones that might make the situation worse". On and on we heard that kind of statement.

I really trust the work of my colleagues on the procedure and House affairs committee. Our chair is doing a fantastic job on that committee. Our members are working hard.

Why does the member not trust her deputy whip, her whip and her deputy House leader who also serve on that committee?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, I tried very hard to show the logical thread. I guess it was lost on some people in the House who do not understand logic and do not see what I was really talking about. I was not avoiding anything to do with the motion. I referred to the motion at least five times and my support for it.

What it does is it gives a tool. As for quick fixes, the point of the motion is that it sets out a series of things that must be studied in order to find not a quick fix, but a long-term solution to this problem. Everyone knows there is no such thing as a quick fix.

It is a standing committee we are asking for that would have the ability to study and prepare all the right answers. As was said earlier today by the mover of the amendment, all of the excellent work already done by the current special committee would be brought into the standing committee so it could be used. There is nothing that says the same members on the current committee need not be on that committee. All their whips have to do is support them. That is it. All the whips have to do is support them.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to the hon. member across the way and her well-spoken words about prorogation and how terrible the government has been. I would like to ask the hon. member about prorogation by the Liberal Party.

As I understand it, the former prime minister, Jean Chrétien, prorogued Parliament for some four months. It was during the Gomery inquiry I believe, which related to \$40 million stolen by the Liberal Party. I am wondering if the member could comment on the prorogation by the former Liberal prime minister as he shut down Parliament.

An hon. member: Do you remember that?

An hon. member: Yes, the \$40 million.

Business of Supply

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. I would like to ask hon. members to give the person who has the floor the opportunity to speak without being interrupted.

The hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, I am going to re-read what I read earlier on. Obviously the member was not listening or someone was talking to him at the time.

The common use of prorogation in current times, this century and last century, is to allow the government to recast its plans and agenda once it feels it has accomplished enough of its goals for the current session. When all of the government's bills have been passed and all the parliamentary committees have done their work, then government regroups to decide the next steps because it has done all the work it said it was going to do.

That was why the Liberal government under Mr. Chrétien shut down Parliament. There were no outstanding issues on the table and all the committees had done their work.

• (1630)

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to add some sanity to a motion that seems to have been put together very poorly today.

The motion before the House suggests that a special committee of the House be appointed to study proposals for restricting the royal power of prorogation. I oppose this motion for many reasons, the first of which is the fact that there is a committee of the House that has already been studying this issue for some months. I chair that committee.

The study is well under way. The committee has heard some 16 witnesses. There have been hundreds of thousands of words of testimony. There have been 10 meetings. I will at some point quote some of the learned scholars who appeared to help us look into the study on prorogation.

I will even compliment the opposition members of that committee and my colleagues on this side for the hard work they have done. At times it has been boring and at other times it has been very exciting. I will speak in a minute about the lecture Professor Russell gave committee members and the chair on how we should listen and learn. I had not been in a lecture hall for a while.

I am going to start by talking about the member for Wascana who moved the motion this morning. I believe he said, "With respect to the study that is under way in the procedure committee, it is unfortunately a rather invisible process. That is not a criticism of that committee".

I would point out that I have fairly broad shoulders and I am able to take those types of insults, although I do not need to. If the member for Wascana had simply spoken to his whip, deputy whip or deputy House leader, people whom I think he probably meets on a daily basis, although by the way the motion was written and the clown show that went on, perhaps not, he would have been told that this work is already being done. I am not saying the work is complete. The study is ongoing. There has been some hard work, very good witnesses and great questions from all members, including those I have already mentioned.

I am not certain what the point of the motion is. I guess one is that this would create a special committee now chaired by a Liberal member. Somebody needs an extra paycheque over there, I suppose. That may be the answer for this. Other than that, I do not get it because the work is being done.

I will compliment the member for Hamilton Centre, who represents his party on the committee. He has done an excellent job of asking some of the tough questions of some of the scholars who appeared. Do the member for Hamilton Centre and I agree on everything? Absolutely not. As a matter of fact, we have great conversations about the philosophical differences between our two parties. However, as the chair, I try to be as collegial as I can be. I certainly try to give everybody all the time possible at every meeting to discuss these issues. I do my best.

What did the member for Hamilton Centre say this morning? I will paraphrase him, which I am sure he will not mind, but if he does, I will hear about it at the next meeting. He said, "When this was brought to my attention yesterday I was bemused. I understand prorogation is a hot issue with the Liberals and it is with us too", speaking on behalf of his party, "but this motion calls for a special committee. We already have a committee that has been holding meetings for months. I would like to know why this motion is even in front of us since it does not seem to make an awful lot of sense to me".

I will explain that the last sentence by the member for Hamilton Centre is one on which we can agree. It does not make a lot of sense to me either.

Some of my colleagues, such as the member for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, have spoken on this issue already today. He is a great member of the committee. He brings great levity to it but also asks very good questions of all of the witnesses, including most of the scholars and some of the citizens.

• (1635)

He said, "Yet, what do we have here? We have an opposition day motion that basically says that the Liberals do not care about the work we have done for the last two and a half to three months".

The previous speaker from that party talked about shutting things down and shutting out what people have said. Well, I am sorry but this motion does exactly the same thing. This motion talks about shutting down the hard work of a committee and saying "Thanks for your work, but we do not care about it". I cannot believe that one party in this House expects that is appropriate with respect to the hard work of a committee including members from all parties.

I will carry on. The member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine also serves on the committee. She has become a special friend on the committee. She has worked very hard on the committee. However, today she said, "Our motion is not outdated. Our motion goes beyond the scope of what the procedure and House affairs committee is dealing with. In fact the study that is being conducted as we speak at that committee is a motion that I brought to that committee, and I know very well what is happening".

Business of Supply

If she knows that, then she knows the nature of our committee. She knows the nature of the chair. She certainly knows the nature of the other members on that committee. She knows that there has been no time when a request from a member has not been honoured. She knows there has been no time when a request from any member of any party about a witness coming forward has not been honoured. Whether it is the terms of reference of the committee study, changing them or moving them in other directions, it has been honoured each and every time it has been asked.

As often as not, we will ask the members what they think and should we go a certain way. We work in a very collegial way. I know I sometimes sound large and gruff, but as a chair I tend to have a fairly good time doing it and I have tried to move that committee forward.

Let us talk about the work the committee has done. We have discussed at length the expert witnesses. There have been at least 10 meetings and 16 witnesses. A majority of the witnesses were people suggested by opposition members. We have been extremely hard working as a committee, but in every case we have asked each of the members who we need to see or if we have left anybody out we have not yet seen. We have even mentioned a couple of learned scholars who we would like to see and we have been trying to organize our time so that they can come. Let us talk about some of the ones we have seen.

Our own law clerk, Mr. Walsh was our first witness. He gave us a great set of parameters for the committee to use.

Some of the other witnesses included Thomas Hall, a retired clerk from the House of Commons, who meets with some of his other clerk friends at the local Tim Hortons and other coffee shops to discuss procedure and House affairs. He came to our committee to give us his views on prorogation.

Professor Mendes, constitutional and international law, University of Ottawa appeared.

Professor Peter Russell from Toronto appeared. I talked about Peter Russell before, and I would like to say what a great professor Peter Russell was even at the committee. He shared with us his thoughts on this issue. He lectured us and certainly set us straight on two or three issues. I think we all went home that day with a new admiration for a professor of political science.

Professor Benoît Pelletier, University of Ottawa appeared. I have some notes here from him and I will share them later in my speech.

Professor Ned Franks, professor of political studies from Queens University appeared.

Again learned scholars appeared at many committees around this House, not just ours.

Christopher White appeared. What a great story he was. He alone had set up a Facebook group about prorogation during the time of prorogation. We thought that was admirable. I think an opposition party member suggested that he come and speak to us. He shared with us his thoughts and views.

One of the thoughts and views he shared with us is that it was not the same sitting at the committee. He said it was not like watching

question period where members are attacking and yelling at each other. He said it was amazing to see members collegially working together towards a common end, and working together as a committee.

I took that with great pride as the chair. I took it as a huge compliment, and so did the other members.

Professor Weinstock, professor of philosophy from the University of Montreal appeared. Professor Weinstock had written a letter about prorogation during the time of prorogation, and had many scholars sign it. We asked him to come forward and talk to us about that.

Professor Eric Adams, faculty of law, University of Alberta appeared.

Professor Nelson Wiseman, department of political science, University of Toronto appeared.

Professor Hugo Cyr, public law and political science and law, University of Quebec in Montreal appeared.

● (1640)

Brian Topp, a former NDP national campaign director, came and spoke too because we thought he had some views he could share with us, and he did. Donald Sproule, an ex-Nortel employee, spoke to us about what we needed to know from his group. Professor Andrew Heard from the Department of Political Science at Simon Fraser University, Professor Monahan from York University and just this last week Professor Bradley Miller, a constitutional law expert from the University of Western Ontario in London, part of my riding, spoke to us.

We have learned a lot. Are we done? No. Have we written our report? No. However, apparently we want to be thrown out with the trash. That is not what I want to see happen. This motion would do that.

Enough about the committee and where it has been. With the time I have left, I will share some of the other reasons why the motion to change prorogation is not correct.

The motion begins from the false premise that there has been some misuse of the prorogation power that needs fixing. I have shared somewhat in my speech already some expert opinions on the use of “gotcha” solutions to constitutional issues. Many of the learned professors told us to watch that we did not use “gotcha” solutions to some of these constitutional issues. We have been careful to watch for that.

The other reason, which is the one I wish to discuss in my remarks today, is the motion seeks to use this false premise to undermine the long-standing constitutional principles and conventions that form the basis of our parliamentary system of government.

Some speakers before me talked about what has happened in previous Parliaments, going back to the 1500s and 1600s. We have studied them all and from time to time it was not as exciting as one would think. We pushed through it because we needed to understand how our system worked.

Business of Supply

To put this discussion in context, we need to go back to the first principles, and I ask members to bear with me here because it might get a bit boring, but I hope to come back to some excitement before I finish.

Under our Constitution, there is a separation of powers between the executive, the legislative and the judicial branches of government. Section 9 of the Constitution Act, 1867 affirms that the executive authority is vested in the Queen. Section 17 establishes that the legislative branch, the Parliament of Canada, is comprised of the Queen, the Senate and the House of Commons. The judicial branch is comprised of the courts.

While it might be trite to state this fundamental tenet of our constitutional democracy in the context of today's debate, it serves as a useful reminder to members that under the separation of powers, some functions are vested exclusively in the executive authority and in which the House of Commons is one component of the legislative branch simply plays no part.

As the Supreme Court of Canada stated in the 1997 Judges Reference, "The separation of powers requires, at the very least, that some functions must be exclusively reserved to particular bodies".

The prerogative to prorogue Parliament is exclusively vested in the Crown. The authorities are unequivocal on this point.

In the 23rd edition of *Erskine May* on page 274 it states:

The prorogation of Parliament is a prerogative act of the Crown. Just as Parliament can commence its deliberations only at the time appointed by the Queen so it cannot continue them any longer than she pleases. But each House exercises its right to adjourn itself independently of the Crown and of the other House.

In the third edition of *An Introduction to the Procedure of the House of Commons*, it is observed, at page 103 that:

It is the ancient right of the Crown to call both Houses of Parliament together when it needs their assistance and to put a temporary period to their labours when it pleases. [...] This joint action of ending the old and providing for the new session is the "prorogation" of Parliament.

In Canada the royal prerogatives to summon, prorogue and dissolve Parliament were given to the Governor General to exercise in the Letters Patent of 1947. Under article VI of the Letters Patent, the sovereign authorized the Governor General "to exercise all powers lawfully belonging to Us in respect of summoning, proroguing or dissolving the Parliament of Canada".

Consistent with our constitutional conventions, the prerogative is exercised on the advice of the prime minister alone.

• (1645)

As O'Brien and Bosc simply state at page 382:

Prorogation of a Parliament, a prerogative act of the Crown taken on the advice of the Prime Minister, results in the termination of the session.

Consistent with our democratic values, the government must hold the confidence of the House and ultimately must answer to the people for its use of those prerogative powers. However, the House itself does not and cannot exercise the royal prerogative. The House can adjourn its proceedings at its discretion, but it cannot prorogue or dissolve Parliament. That is within the discretion of the Crown alone.

Another important feature of our system is that certain matters relating to our Constitution are entrenched and cannot be changed but through special amending procedures. Many of our constitutional scholars who have visited our committee so far suggest that the only way to change the prorogation prerogative of the Crown would be through constitutional changes. It is a tough thing to get to but that is the only way to change it.

One such matter is changes to the office of the Queen or the Governor General. Under section 41 of the Constitution Act, 1982, any such changes must be effected by a royal proclamation having unanimous approval of the House of Commons, the Senate and every provincial legislative assembly.

The procedure and House affairs committee as I have stated is already doing a comprehensive study on prorogation and we have heard from many experts on the topic. Many of these experts are of the view that the changes to limit the royal prerogative on prorogation would affect the office of the Governor General in such a way as to require a unanimous constitutional amendment.

What is more, Professor Benoît Pelletier, a constitutional expert at the University of Ottawa, concluded that prorogation in itself was a constitutional power intertwined with the separation of powers. He stated:

In my opinion, prorogation can be seen as a component of the separation of powers in government. The separation of powers is obviously a pillar of the Canadian state, and there is every reason to believe that the Supreme Court of Canada would recognize that even the principle of the separation of powers is based on the Constitution. In other words, the separation of powers enjoys tacit constitutional protection, and because the power to prorogue is a critical component of the separation of powers, it, too, enjoys that same constitutional protection...I have concluded that the prorogation power is tied to the separation of powers, because it provides for these checks and balances between the legislative branch and the executive branch. It contributes to those checks and balances. Therefore, I do not see how the prorogation power could be dissociated from the very principle of the separation of powers.

It was about that dry at committee but we chose to study it and we chose to look at it.

These checks and balances are at the heart of the principle of the separation of powers and what makes the Westminster parliamentary system function. While it is often more art than science, it has served us well thus far in our country's history.

I stated at the outset in my remarks that I oppose the supply day motion and the debate under way today. At the very least, it would be duplicative of the work already nearing completion by the procedure and House affairs committee and the hard work that it has done. At the very worst, it was start us down the path of undermining the long-standing and basic tenets of our parliamentary system and of constitutional government.

Prorogation, as I have stated, is at the core of the separation of powers. It provides the Crown with a mechanism for responding to changing circumstances, such as the serious global economic crisis of last year. It allows for a new session of Parliament to be launched with the new priorities of the government set out in a throne speech, presented to parliamentarians and to the people of Canada.

Business of Supply

It provides the House with an opportunity to respond to the government's recalibrated legislative and policy program through votes of confidence on important matters, such as the recent budget bill here in the House.

In my opinion, this motion goes too far. I would encourage all hon. members and all hard-working committee members in the House to please join me in opposing this motion.

• (1650)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Before moving to questions and comments, 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 Hull—Aylmer, Government Accountability; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague went into great detail about the technical machinations of the separation of powers, the Constitution and all things pertaining to Parliament and our country. However, I want to bring up an issue about prorogation itself and from some of the very same people whom he quoted in his speech.

The majority of them talk about the very spirit of prorogation in the sense that the legislature needs to be refreshed because the agenda has been exhausted. Therefore, the grand master plan that was established by the government to get that mandate has exhausted itself to the point where now it must renew. It had over 35 pieces of legislation, most of which were promised by it under elements of crime fighting and the life that were never enacted. Yet when they were delayed before, the government blamed the Liberal-dominated Senate, which I believe has reversed itself and is now the Conservative-dominated Senate.

First, why did the government feel prorogation was so necessary?

Second, if the committee is so busy, as he explains, would an offshoot, another committee being set up, not ease the pressure of the work involved and get to the crux of the matter, simply to raise the bar?

Mr. Joe Preston: Madam Speaker, I always enjoy being in the House with him because it is always a great time to listen to his thought process.

To answer his second question first, I do not think I said at any time that we were too busy. I said we were seized with the opportunity to study what we were already working on.

Under the guise of three members of his party, and I am sure he knows them as occasionally they must talk, the whip, the deputy House leader and the deputy whip sit on that committee. At no time during any of the committee functions did they ever say that we had too much work, or that they would like to study this someplace else so they could have a Liberal chair of that committee and somehow run it a different way.

The answer for him is we have moved forward and studied each of the issues on prorogation. Yes, I did get technical because that is truly what we have been learning. We have to study the process of prorogation along with what happens when it is used. The committee has been seized with that at all party levels. All four parties in the

House have participated at that committee at length, with great questioning and getting great answers from the scholars around our country. We would like the opportunity not to waste that.

He talks about wasting opportunities in the House. Here is the chance to not waste three months of work by a hard-working committee that, while it may be different than some other committees in the House, works together, respects one another, talks openly and honestly with its members and its witnesses, gathers facts and is ready to report back to the House on an issue that it thought was important too.

• (1655)

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I heard two parts to the remarks of the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

On the parts where he gave his opinion on prorogation and what it ought to be and ought not to be, I disagree with just about every word of that, which he would expect and it is part of the dynamics of this place.

On the other half, however, I want to affirm that, as the chair of the committee, I believe the hon. member has done an excellent job. He bends over backwards to be fair. He brings humour to the role, to deal with tensions, so it really is a good committee doing good work. The tough stuff is going to come when we get in camera and start battling out the report, but we are not there yet. The whole point is the committee is alive and well and doing the work that it was charged to do by this place.

The time frames the Liberals have put forward, both the ridiculous one of June 23 in their original motion, would mean this committee would have to be up and running, do its work, finish and deliver the report in six days. Now they amended date of November 2. However, some of us on the committee have said that the odds of us being done in time to meet a November 2 deadline are just ridiculous.

Recognizing we are having a partisan debate, nonetheless, would the chair give his opinion on whether the newly amended date of November 2 would actually solve the problem? Is that a workable date as opposed to June 23 date, which clearly is not?

Mr. Joe Preston: Madam Speaker, first, I congratulate the member for Hamilton Centre for the hard work he does on that committee, usually rushing from another committee to get to it. He is a hard-working member of the House and often asks an extra round of questions of some of the more technical witnesses we have in order to get the answers that the committee needs.

The real answer to his question concerns the phony date of next Wednesday that was originally in this motion. I am not certain what happened to the clown show over there this morning, trying to figure out if they could do the work by that time. We have spent some two and a half to three months just getting to this point.

I would suggest that if we carried on and they allowed us to finish our work, we would certainly have a report back to the House by that November 2 date. I think it would be possible if that were the case, but if he is asking me if we could start a new committee, a committee chaired by the opposition party, the Liberals, and get it done by that time, I would suggest that after what we have seen today in just getting the motion moved, I do not think it is likely the organization is there.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London for being the strong working member that he is, but obviously he has the appreciation of all members on the committee for his leadership as chair.

I am, quite honestly, trying to figure out what is happening here today. It would seem to me that the Leader of the Opposition has become so insecure in his leadership that he does not trust the abilities of his deputy House leader, his whip or his deputy whip to have fruitful input into a committee that has spent, as we have heard, three months getting to a point of bringing together some of the detailed and in-depth discussion around prorogation.

I have my own thoughts on what this motion is about, but I would like to ask the chair, the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, what he thinks the reasons are for this unprepared motion coming forward at this time.

Mr. Joe Preston: Madam Speaker, far be it from me to try to think of what evil lurks in the hearts of men. The true answer is that the committee, collectively, has worked together and has collectively done its work.

The member mentioned that the whip of the Liberal Party sits on the committee, as does the deputy whip and the deputy House leader. We have been pretty proud of the work we have been doing and, collectively, we are proud of it.

I may be in trouble for breaking confidence from an in camera meeting but I will give it a shot anyway. The whip of the Liberal Party has made me chair of the month for every month that we have sat during this process because I think we have done a fairly good job and have moved the issue forward, but in a way where Canadians can understand what we are doing.

It is fairly dry material and I do try to keep my humour about me and keep the committee non-partisan, not talking to each other but talking to witnesses and talking through the chair so that we can actually accomplish what we set out to accomplish.

However, if the hon. member is asking me to understand how Liberals arrive at motions, I have not got there yet.

• (1700)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Papineau.

I am pleased to speak to this motion. I think it is a very good one. I would hope that all members in the House support it. I hear some laughing on the other side, but I would say to those Conservative backbenchers sitting over there not to allow their whip to whip them into line, as he always does, because this is not about—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member. I will recognize for questions and comments only those members who are not heckling.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know they do not want to hear that but this is a very serious issue. This is about the rights of Canadians through their elected representatives.

I know on that side of the House, we have seen how the government has operated, and previous speakers have spoken about this, about how organizations that question the government have their funding cut and how farm organizations that challenge the government have the door slammed in their face, never to see the minister again. I know for Conservative backbenchers there is a lot of fear and intimidation from the PMO but, for Heaven's sake, they were elected to represent Canadians, to represent their constituents, and it is time that they stood up to their leader who is attempting to run roughshod over this place. His actions, in so doing, are undermining democracy.

After Canadians exercised their democratic right and prevented the Prime Minister from gaining a majority, he first broke his election promise of fixed elections and then he prorogued Parliament and basically tried to put a padlock on democracy. Members will remember that at the time he said that it was to recalculate. Recalculate their legislation, I guess, but we have not seen much recalculation. When Parliament opened a considerable time later, what came forward from the government was the weakest and shallowest legislation agenda in Canadian history.

In fact, in a Canadian Press story, it stated:

Parliamentary expert Ned Franks says he can't recall another legislative sitting that has accomplished so little.

He went on to say:

This parliament isn't functioning like a normal parliament.

He blames a government that "views Parliament as the enemy"....

That is a fairly serious comment from a well-known expert on parliaments and democracies and how they work. Backbench members over there should be very concerned.

To sum this up on this end, the Prime Minister sees Parliament as the enemy. He does not want debates or discussions. This motion lays down some rules around how any prorogation would work.

I think part of the problem here is that the Prime Minister has failed to understand that respect for this place is not a matter of convenience. This is a government that when confronted on an issue of the rights of Parliament, in this case, the right of Parliament now confirmed by the Speaker, to have access to the documents related to the detainee issue that the Speaker had to rule on and challenge the government, we did get into negotiations and got, we think but we will see, a reasonable settlement for the moment.

The consequences of all that was clearly a failed legislative agenda. Only really two substantive bills have passed this place. That is probably the worst record in history.

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However, it goes further than that. It is not just the Prime Minister and how he tries to shut this place down. It is how he tries to challenge the rights of committees, and that is a very serious issue. The Prime Minister has instructed his ministers to follow his example and deny committees the witnesses they have asked for.

I am on one of those committees and I want to background this so that people understand how serious this matter is. At committees, we need to be able to do our job. If we are going to represent the Canadians who sent us here to hold the government to account, we need to be able to see and question the witnesses who we believe have answers.

● (1705)

When the committee started its hearings on access to information, Mr. Togneri was to appear as a witness. He had named some others who we should maybe investigate as well. We also wanted to hear from Mr. Soudas, the Prime Minister's chief spokesman. However, all of a sudden the House leader stood in the House and there was a new rule around this town, which was that certain witnesses would not be able to appear.

In fact, I have a letter from the Prime Minister directed to the clerk of the committee, which states:

The purpose of this letter is to inform the Committee of my instruction to Mr. Soudas that he will not appear before the Committee.

The Prime Minister did go on a little further to say:

Next week I will be present in Question Period on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Questions about these matters can be directed to me there.

However, when a member stood to ask a question on June 10 about Mr. Soudas, the Prime Minister did not answer. Is the Prime Minister's word worth the paper it is written on? He said that he would answer and he did not, but he would not allow Mr. Soudas to appear before the committee. That is a very serious matter.

As well, the legislative law clerk appeared before the committee, Mr. Rob Walsh. Committee members were questioning him this week on the authority that the Prime Minister may or may not have and this is what he had to say in response. We were talking about the authority of committees to call witnesses. Mr. Walsh stated, "the Prime Minister and any minister has no authority to prevent someone from appearing in front of a committee".

He went on to say, "but everyone has a duty—apart from members of Parliament, senators, and the Governor General—to show up when summoned before a committee".

Mr. Walsh, who is the expert in this town, clearly believes that committees have the right to call witnesses. This is a very serious issue.

I do not know what the government is trying to cover up. I do not know what it was thinking in terms of its action in not allowing Parliament to work by proroguing it, then not re-calibrating and bringing in, as I said, the weakest legislative performance we have ever seen in government, and now monkeying around with committees and preventing them from doing their work. I see this motion as extremely important. We need to put some rules around what the Prime Minister can and cannot do.

This Parliament is the people's Parliament. It is here so that we as elected representatives can do our jobs on behalf of Canadians. We live in a democracy, not a dictatorship, and, in a democracy, parliamentarians need to be able to do their job but we cannot do our job if this place is closed down on the whim of the Prime Minister or if ministers and the Prime Minister order others not to appear before committee. That is unacceptable.

I encourage everyone, especially the backbenchers in the Conservative Party, to develop some backbone and stand up for Canadians for a change.

● (1710)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just heard my colleague on the other side talking about this being a democracy, not a dictatorship, and talking about prorogation.

The question I want to put to him concerns the long gun registry. Will he exercise his democratic right to vote to end the long gun registry or will he bow down to the dictatorship of his leader, the Leader of the Opposition, who will force him to vote against the wishes of his people?

This is important because his people want him to vote against the long gun registry. He said that he would vote against it. Will he do it?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, of course I am going to exercise my democratic right. Maybe that member knows something I do not. He claims that my constituents oppose the long gun registry. A majority of my constituents do not.

In terms of my original motion, I wanted the government to show some leadership in terms of finding a compromise that would work. The government has failed. The Prime Minister has failed to bring in a government bill. It is a backbencher's bill.

When I turned to the leader of the Liberal Party, the Leader of the Opposition, he worked with rural Canadians, he worked with urban Canadians, and he found a compromise that works. That is leadership that is coming from this side of the House where we see none over there. I will vote—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, trying to bait the member on the long gun registry is totally out of order and irrelevant to the debate at hand.

The government has already taken its lumps on prorogation. It was hitting 40% in the polls at the end of December. After it prorogued the House, its numbers plummeted and have not recovered since. The government has taken its lumps on this issue. It knows not to do it again. I would be surprised if it would try it a third time.

The Conservatives are really not sure whether they want minority government to work. I think many of them feel that if they make minority government work, the voters will not give them the majority they want. They could make it work if they wanted to. If they studied other cases like Gary Filmon in Manitoba or Bill Davis in Ontario, they could see situations where minority governments did work.

Look at the Liberal minority governments of the 1960s and all the great things that the Pearson government brought in to prove that minority governments can work. I do not think the Conservatives have resolved that within their own caucus.

The Liberal Party has made a misstep here in bringing forward this resolution. They had a resolution on MS which was a very smart move on their part, and they killed it sometime last night and ended up coming in with what is essentially a redundant motion, and giving the Conservatives the opportunity to make fun of them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would like to give the hon. member for Malpeque the opportunity to respond.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, I am glad to respond to those comments. It really comes back to leadership. The government does not have a majority. A minority Parliament is a place of compromise, debate and compromise, and looking at the issues.

As I said on the gun issue, our leader showed leadership. Their side has not. We have not even seen a bill from the government on that issue.

On many of the committees, we see leadership coming from the opposition side. On the citizenship and immigration committee, it was my seatmate who provided the leadership on that issue to find the compromises to make the bill work. That is what we see coming forward from the opposition.

The member talked about previous governments, the Pearson government that brought in so much of what is the foundation of social policy in this country. That was during a minority government because Liberal leaders are willing to develop the compromises and show the leadership to do what is best for Canadians.

The problem is the Prime Minister is on a one-track agenda. It is his way or the highway and that is not the way democracy is supposed to work.

• (1715)

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on what appears to be the last day of the spring session we have the opportunity to look back on what we have learned during this session and look at how we might avoid making the same mistakes next time.

[English]

This motion here today gives us an opportunity to look back at prorogation and all that it is a symptom of, and ask ourselves some serious questions about what we are doing here in this chamber.

This chamber holds 308 people who come from every corner of this country and from every conceivable background and identity. We represent, individually and collectively, all the extraordinary diversity: the different voices, viewpoints, faiths, beliefs and creeds of this country. Our job is to come together to figure out the best path forward.

Whether we sit on this side of the House or that side of the House, we are all Canadian and we all share a core set of beliefs that together we can have a fair, more prosperous, better country to leave to our children and grandchildren. This is the spirit that imbues the

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public service. This is why we spend so many days of the year away from our families, our homes and our communities to come and build a sense of compromise and a sense of moving forward in ways we can all agree with.

That is why it is so troubling to have seen over the past four years a culture of division, cynicism, secrecy and lack of accountability permeate the House in its entirety. There were two prorogations in two years, the first to avoid a vote of non-confidence that would have surely brought the government down, the second to avoid difficult questions on how much the government allowed to happen around the torture of Afghan citizens. That is not the kind of presentation we need to be putting to Canadians.

We have a House in which the winner of question period is the one who can shout loudest and where the points are made to disrupt and distract people.

[Translation]

It becomes a game of scoring points, finding the right word to put others on the spot, trying to find a strategy that will please our grassroots and not giving a fig about what others might say, especially when they are not going to vote for us anyway. We are impoverishing this House and the very principles we are here to defend.

[English]

The government has understood. It was elected a few seats shy of a majority by just 5.2 million Canadians. Of the 33 million citizens of this country, roughly two-thirds of them are voters. A little over 5 million votes could almost give it a majority. The government realized that it was a climate in which it could promote cynicism and disengagement, suppress voter turnout, and suppress people's feelings that government can be a force for good and a place that gets things done.

Instead, it pushed this idea of dysfunctional parliaments by demonstrating how dysfunctional it can be under a government that does not believe in government. It does not believe that we have a duty to work together to build a better country and a better future.

• (1720)

[Translation]

We are meandering aimlessly at a time when we are faced with tremendous challenges with regard to the environment, human rights and poverty, both here at home on our native reserves and throughout the world.

As Canadians, we have an obligation to face up to our duties and responsibilities and the opportunities that present themselves because we live in an extraordinary and prosperous country where everyone is entitled to express their opinions.

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[English]

That is why there is this desire to shut down debate, to quash democratic instincts, to marginalize voices that come forward with differing points of views, whether they be Richard Colvins or Linda Keens, or any women's group who speaks out against them and are told they need to be quiet or else their funding will be cut. Anyone who disagrees with this government gets pushed aside and that unfortunately applies as well to the opposition when the government thinks it can get away with it.

That is what this past prorogation was about. It was about making sure that Parliament, that government, that Stephen Harper could use, sorry, I apologize, that the hon. Prime Minister—

Mr. Royal Galipeau: The right hon.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: The right hon. Prime Minister, although I wonder whether he has really earned that title from time to time.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

An hon. member: The right.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: But the right part, yes, perhaps very far right. I will leave that there.

The challenge becomes that the Prime Minister gets to use every tribune he can use, all the media, all the voices, all the attention, and gets to further marginalize people who disagree with him.

That is why we are talking about prorogation today. That is why we want Canadians to go into this summer remembering that the government does not value its voices. It is not a government that accepts easily the legitimacy that exists in every member sitting in this House who was duly elected by the people they strive to represent.

[Translation]

I completely disagree with the philosophy of my friends in the Bloc Québécois on the future of Quebec and Canada, but they are here legitimately. As for the NDP socialists, as the government likes to refer to them, I do not agree with many of their ideas, but they legitimately represent their voters and they share their voices and concerns. That is the foundation of our democracy. Quashing this legitimacy and reducing this possibility is quite worrisome to me.

[English]

I work as the official critic for multiculturalism and youth for the Liberal Party, and as such I got—

• (1725)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake is rising on a point of order.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to point out that my hon. colleague spoke ill of the Prime Minister. First of all he mentioned his name and second, he made a disrespectful comment. Standing Order 18 states:

No Member shall speak disrespectfully of the Sovereign, nor of any of the Royal Family, nor of the Governor General or the person administering the Government of Canada; nor use offensive words against either House, or against any Member thereof. No Member may reflect upon any vote—

I then turn to O'Brien and Bosc to chapter 3, page 99, and I note the Speaker's ruling in 2003:

Speakers discourage members of Parliament from using names in speeches if they are speaking ill of some other person because, with parliamentary privilege applying to what they say, anything said that is damaging to the reputation or to the individual...is then liable to be published with the cover of parliamentary privilege and the person is unable to bring any action in respect of those claims.

It has been ruled in the past that these comments are definitely out of order and that these comments are a contempt. I would ask that you, Madam Speaker, rope in the member for making these types of scandalous and scurrilous comments.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): On the same point of order, the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): I appreciate the input, Madam Speaker. On the same point of order, yes. What my hon. colleague mentioned was that the quotation was not worthy of the title. In the House we all say that we are not worthy of the title we have. We do it in campaigns. We do it here in the House. It is a function of our jobs. In this particular case, it is the function of the job as Prime Minister that we feel he does not measure up to. I do not believe there is a point of order.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. I would ask the hon. member to withdraw the remarks.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: I apologize to you, Madam Speaker, and to members of the House for getting a little carried away. I withdraw those remarks. I was raised better than that, to appreciate and respect the office.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I believe that settles the matter. We will now move to questions and comments for a few minutes. The hon. member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I did listen to the hon. member's speech and found it somewhat troubling. We have been in government since 2006, and in that time period there has been one motion of non-confidence, which was defeated. We have passed a number of budgets, which were supported by one of the opposition parties. We have passed an economic action plan.

The real reason that this motion is being brought forward right now by the Liberals is because they actually have no policies that Canadians care to listen to. They do not care about national defence. They care more about terrorists than they do about our soldiers. They have no economic action plan. Their policies on taxes are to increase taxes on families and businesses. They want to implement a carbon tax on Canadians and kill business and kill jobs.

The last election was also about prorogation. They were not elected by the people. They were devastated. They got one of the worst results in Canadian history. Yet, the Liberals wanted to foist on Canadians prime minister, their leader, who was massively rejected by people and who Canadians said they did not want and whose policies they did not want. The Liberals wanted to seize government because that is all they care about. They do not care about Canadians. They have no policies, so they bring embarrassing motions—

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. I must interrupt the hon. member and give an opportunity to the hon. member for Papineau to respond briefly.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I will just take two seconds, because I could not hear a question there, to respond with the end of my speech.

I got to meet with a group of community activists who were interested in getting their young members of this ethnic community more involved in politics. They said, “One of the problems is, our young people, coming from the home country, are worried that if they help out with an opposition party, they will end up on a list and be banned, and have more difficulty finding work”.

I wanted to respond and say, “This is Canada. That does not happen”. I am not so sure any more, and I could not say anything.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to the ruling from Madam Speaker, I, too, would like to apologize to the House for the comments that were made. I misjudged the comments.

Nonetheless, my colleague who, as the critic for youth, is well aware of the aspect of social networking and how it encompasses young people in this country today as they communicate in ways that are beyond what we could even imagine when we were that age.

What happened here in the prorogation period was that the Conservatives tried to silence the voices that my other colleague spoke about, but the people protested, through social networking to begin with, and the youth of this country became engaged and circumvented that silencing. Through their own initiatives, through volunteer work, they decided that the supremacy of Parliament was just that: supreme. It was circumvented and runs against the way democracies are run.

I would like my colleague to comment on that aspect and how engaged people were and how upset they were when they felt the government was circumventing the rituals that we cherish so much in this Parliament.

• (1730)

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's remarks. He is absolutely right when he says that young people, who often get a bad rep for being disengaged and not caring about politics, demonstrated their outrage in huge numbers through the tools that they know so well, the social media, to explain that no, they did not want a government that suspended work when the going got tough.

They wanted to ensure that we were all working hard together, which is why, during the prorogation period that the government imposed upon us, the Liberal Party held over 30 sessions, consulting with Canadians, bringing in young Canadians, bringing in people who were using the empty rooms of this Parliament to talk about the issues that they wanted us to be addressing as parliamentarians.

So we brought forward opportunities for young people to be heard, particularly when we consider that in the last election, for the ages of 18 to 25, the voting turnout was at about 20%. Four out of five young people did not vote in the last election, and for me, that is something we need to turn around. We will only do it by engaging

with them openly, responsibly, and by not promoting this culture of cynicism and deceit that this government is known for.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be speaking to this Liberal opposition day motion. It has been a very interesting debate for most of the day, primarily, with the Liberal opposition getting beaten up in an unprecedented fashion.

A couple of days ago I read some quotes in the House about the minority government of Lester Pearson from the 1960s and how successful it was. One of the accounts was prefaced by the words that it was a “chaotic government”. Another one, I think, was “confused”. But both accounts, at the end of the day, and this is the historical record I am referring to, indicated that this was an extremely productive period of time. It may not have seemed like it at the time, but the fact of the matter is that the government, over that period, brought in a new Canadian flag, a medicare system, amalgamated the armed forces, and several other serious pieces of legislation were enacted at that time.

There have been other periods, too, of minority governments that have worked very well, and I have mentioned those before, such as Filmon in Manitoba and Davis in Ontario. And there are probably a lot of other good examples.

However, the public has been trained to believe that somehow a majority government is the ideal. The facts are not borne out by that. After the Pearson government, we had a majority government under Pierre Trudeau. It did not accomplish an awful lot in four years. As a matter of fact, the public was so unimpressed with the first four years that they returned the government in a minority situation with David Lewis and the NDP supporting that government for two years, in which we did get a number of very good pieces of legislation passed.

An hon. member: Petro-Canada.

Mr. Jim Maloway: A colleague points out that Petro-Canada was one of the examples of what was accomplished during that minority government.

So, we have all sorts of examples. Actually, we have more examples of where a minority government has actually produced results than we actually do of a majority government. Majority governments tend to be overconfident and actually not be that productive at the end of the day.

The current government, I believe, was an accidental government, in the first place. It was not guaranteed that it was going to become a government in the beginning in 2006. The Conservatives formed the government and they were still following their Republican advisers in how to deal with opposition by being obstructionist in committees and taking the attitude that if they could somehow just manage to make things not work, they could get themselves defeated in two years and then present themselves to the public as innocent victims of a minority government situation, unable to get legislation passed, and somehow they were going to be rewarded with a majority government. Not only that, they set a fixed election date and then proceeded to ignore their own fixed election date and called their own election in September 2008.

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Well, look what happened. They ended up with a minority government again because, once again, for the second time in a row, the public did not really trust them. The public is not totally enamoured with them, or their leader, or the results that they have been able to show so far. There is a general lack of direction over there. There is confusion over there. They cannot decide whether they want to make a minority government work to their advantage or whether they want to mess up a minority government so they can go out and argue for a majority situation.

We see that on a daily basis here. We saw them in government in the election of 2008, with the Prime Minister travelling the country, wearing his sweater, saying, "The land is strong. Everything is going fine". Meanwhile, the stock market was melting down around us, and what did he say? He said it was a buying opportunity. "Go out and buy stocks", he said, as the markets were plunging.

• (1735)

The Conservatives are totally out of sync with what is happening in the economy. They are totally out of sync with what is happening in the country and the results show it. Within days of coming into power, they brought in their economic update and then wondered why the opposition parties were not happy with the results of their economic update introduction. What did they do? They prorogued the House. That got them through crisis number one.

We would think they would have learned by that close call. I think they were somewhat chastened. They came back in Parliament and we proceeded for another year. It was purely accidental. I really believe that the Prime Minister prorogued the House not really thinking that his numbers would drop a dozen points overnight. He did not anticipate the reaction of the public to what he had done. He created a lot of damage. Not only did he ruin his chances for a quick election after the Olympics and put his numbers down in the basement, but he created a reaction against Conservatives and the government across the country which has still not healed.

Not only that but he wiped out his legislative agenda. Thirty-six bills were wiped out by that measure. It would be humorous if it were not so sad. Nineteen of them were his justice bills, his tough on crime bills.

We do not have to worry about beating up on the government and knocking the government down. It seems to be doing a very good job of destroying itself and suffering from self-inflicted wounds at the end of the day. It does not need the opposition to take it down. It can do that by itself and it has proven it over and over again.

What my leader and our party did when we came back was to bring in a motion in this House, which passed, to deal with this whole issue of prorogation of Parliament. It is not that I believe that the Prime Minister will do it again, but we just feel that it is time to take a look at this issue and ensure that we examine it a little more and set up some guidelines. We know that when the Liberals were in power, they prorogued the House. All governments prorogue the House, but they do so when their agenda is finished. They do not prorogue the House when they are in trouble.

Today several speakers have talked about the 1800s and John A. Macdonald, being the last prime minister who prorogued the House when he was in trouble because he was trying to stop an

investigation into scandals with the building of the railway. That is the type of thing we are trying to avoid. The government points to all those times that other governments prorogued. It says, "Look, other governments have done it. We should be able to do it too". But the reality is that the conditions were totally different. This government prorogued the House to save its own skin.

Our leader brought in a motion, which was passed by the House. It said:

That, in the opinion of the House, the Prime Minister shall not advise the Governor General to prorogue any session of any Parliament for longer than seven calendar days without a specific resolution of this House of Commons to support such a prorogation.

That was passed by the opposition parties in this House.

The chair of the committee spoke today for 20 minutes. The member for Hamilton Centre, our representative on the committee, and other members have described how they and the Liberal members on the committee, the Liberal deputy House leader, the whip and the deputy whip, were happily dealing with the issue for the last three months.

• (1740)

The Liberals have to know that the report will be written in due course. It will arrive in October, November or whenever it arrives and everyone seems to be getting along.

People can imagine our shock when we found out that the Liberals used their last opposition day in the House to showcase not unemployment, MS or other serious issues. I went back to my hotel last night with a file on MS. I thought that was what the Liberals were going to be discussing today. I was told it was coming up.

The other night in the take note debate on MS, the Liberal member, who is very strong on the MS issue, did an excellent job. Just on the strength of the three questions I asked in that four hour period, I already have had a dozen emails from across the country on the issue of MS. People were very interested in that debate. I thought, for once, the Liberals made a smart decision to go with a discussion on MS.

I found out this morning it would be on prorogation. We already have a committee on prorogation and the Liberals have members on that committee. What went wrong? I guess during their garden party last night, they decided to make a change. It was either at the garden party or it was 8:30 this morning.

Let me give the Liberals some advice. It is not a good idea to making crucial decisions at 8:30 in the morning. Most of us are not fully awake at that time and our judgment can be somewhat impaired. Obviously theirs were.

Therefore, they introduced the motion and about 9 o'clock this morning, someone actually read this motion. They realized they would have to produce a report and have it done in six days.

We have members on a committee that have been working on this for three months. The eminent professors and constitutional experts in the country have been brought before the committee and testified. The Liberal members are at the committee, but they decided that it was not good enough. They wanted to set up their own committee and to report in six days. That would be a miracle in the making if they could do something like that.

The Liberals realized that six days was unreasonable, so they decided to amend their motion on the fly, on the floor. For those who have not been watching the debate, the motion reads, and bear in mind we already have such a committee:

That a special committee of the House be hereby established to undertake an immediate study of all relevant issues pertaining to prorogation, including the circumstances in which a request that Parliament be prorogued would be appropriate or inappropriate, and the nature of any rule changes (either by way of the Standing Orders or legislation or both) that may be necessary avoid any future misuse of prorogation;

We have already established, by virtue of the chair and other members of the committee, and virtually every member of the committee, except the three Liberal members on the committee, have actually spoken today, that the limits for the committee are broad enough to cover all eventualities.

● (1745)

Every possible area of this subject can be dealt with by the committee's rules. In fact, it can change the rules if it wants to add in new elements. All the Liberal members have to do is simply go to the next committee meeting and bring the ideas that the authors of this motion today want and they can be added into the process.

The motion says, "that, as a part of this study, the committee take into account the specific proposals for new rules pertaining to prorogation offered by the Leader of the Opposition", and those ought to be pretty good, "including: (a) a requirement that the Prime Minister give Parliament written notice in advance of any request to prorogue", and that is reasonable.

It goes on to say:

together with his/her reasons therefore; (b) a requirement that there be a debate in the House of Commons after any such notice is given, but before any request for prorogation is made; (c) a requirement that the express consent of the House of Commons be obtained at the conclusion of any such debate if (i) fewer than 12 months have passed since the last Speech from the Throne, (ii) the requested prorogation is for a period of more than 30 days, or (iii) an issue of confidence is outstanding before the House; and (d) a provision that allows committees of Parliament to continue to function during any prorogation; and

Then the Liberals came in with their amendment, which said:

—that the special committee also take into account any report on prorogation that may be forthcoming from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, and provide an analysis of the consequences of the use of prorogation as a device to avoid accountability or to silence voices that may wish to express disagreement with the government;

All these things have already been covered by this committee for the last three months. The Liberals then go on to talk about the content of the committee, how it would be comprised of 11 members, including 5 members from the government party, 3 members from the opposition, 2 from the Bloc and 1 from the NDP, provided that the chair be from the official opposition.

As the chair pointed out, we will have the existing chair at this committee and we will appoint a new committee now with the chair

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being appointed from the Liberals. We will have a Liberal chair and we will have to pay that chair \$11,165 plus the cost of bringing all those same witnesses we just heard from back again for another go around.

This is absolutely insane. No wonder the government is having its chuckles today at the Liberals' expense. I know it is having a great day. However, it should not be having a great day because it does not deserve one.

The amendment continues, "that the committee have all of the powers of a Standing Committee as provided in the Standing Orders". That is exactly what we have already. Once again, there is more duplication. It goes on say, "that the members to serve on the said committee be appointed by the Whip of each party". By the way, the whip is already on the committee. This whip is going to appoint members to the second committee as well. It goes on to say, "each party depositing with the Clerk of the House a list of his or her party's members of the committee no later than June 23, 2010".

The Liberals then talk about membership substitutions. I guess the most important part of this is they are deleting June 23 and putting November 2 as the date. That gives the government a lot of time to have an election in the meantime, or maybe even prorogue the House again for all we know.

This is the sad state of affairs that we find ourselves in on the last day of the sitting of the House. I only wish the Liberal caucus members would take a little stronger stand. I do not blame the Liberal caucus members. I do not think any of them really had a clue what was coming down today. I am sure they are going to be taking this back to their next caucus meeting, trying to find out just what went wrong.

They are probably wondering why they gave up a perfectly good opposition motion on MS, or why they gave up a perfectly good opposition motion that had traction and was a great idea. They did a great job on it a few days ago. Why did they mess up and bring in a motion like this, which will not make it through the House of Commons, and it should not. It is simply a duplication of what we have right now.

● (1750)

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address some of the issues the member raised. First, the government is having a great day as is everyone who is a Canadian. Being a Canadian implies and means they are having a great day.

Second, the member talked about Republicanism at the beginning of his comment. I take offence to that. I am a monarchist and that is about as far away from Republicanism as one can get, so I hope the member reflects on that.

I want to point the great initiatives on democratic reform that the government is undertaking, from term limits for senators, to expanded voting opportunities, representation by population, getting tough on political loans. Canadians are asking for these to be passed. That is exactly what the government is doing, including bringing forward legislation on Senate elections, which has been a long-time demand of the people of Canada.

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My question for the member deals with the Liberal Party. He is quite critical of the Liberal Party. It seems the Liberal Party is in great disarray. Look at what happened with the immigration bill that the NDP, the Bloc and this government came together to work on with great success and yet the Liberals were all over the map. They were left, they were right, back and forward, they did not know which direction they were going. Would the member agree that the Liberal Party is in complete disarray?

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I guess it is a question of relativity as to which one of the two coalition partners in the House are the most disorganized. I have seen the government trying to recover from the prorogation debacle of a few months ago where it torched its 36 bills, 19 tough on crime bills. Does it bring them all back in at the beginning of the session like it should have to allow the opposition to pick and choose which ones it wants to pass? No. The Conservatives wait on the pardon legislation and call it two days before the end of the session. If that is not either just plan stupidity or brinkmanship, I am not sure which one, but it has to be one of the two.

I would not take the view that somehow the Liberals are a bunch of incompetents here. The Conservatives are the government. They are supposed to be organized. They are supposed to have their legislative agenda in order and are responsible for getting things through.

I really want to compliment them and the minister for his refugee bill. He did a great job on that as did Parliament. We need more of that. I ask the government to live up to what Pearson did when he was in a minority situation. It should set some goals and try to attain them rather than to try to torch committees and short-circuit the process and cause all kinds of problems. Why does the government not set a goal to get some real legislation through—

• (1755)

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to stop the member there to allow a couple more questions and comments.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry.

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his rant. I have a couple of questions. I am reading the How They Vote Website. I notice the hon. member has more words spoken in the House than the next three members combined. Therefore, I am tempted to ask him if he knows we do not get paid by the word in the House of Commons, but I will not ask him.

Instead, I will ask about a couple of interesting quotes that I read recently. One comes from the Liberal leader. He wrote this in *The New York Times* magazine. He wrote, “politics is theater. It is part of the job to pretend to have emotions that you do not actually feel”. We have seen that with this opposition day motion and some of the speeches we have heard from the Liberal side today.

Another quote is by the son of a former Liberal prime minister, the member for Papineau who talked about his leader saying:

—he’s a little all over the place sometimes. He says this, he says that — he contradicts himself. For me, he’s not someone with...maybe he has the intelligence, but maybe not the wisdom required.

Maybe this opposition day motion is an example of this. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to say this because it will be my last chance to make a speech or comment in this session of the House since we are planning to finish today. I have been here for 20 months now and have had a very great time after spending 23 years in the provincial legislature. I am very aware that I did not get a chance to say proper goodbyes when I was a provincial member because the election came about so suddenly. I am also aware we are in a minority government and there is a possibility we may not be back in the fall.

If that eventuality were to happen, I want to say that I have had a terrific 20 months. I have been thrilled to work with everyone here. I hope to be back after the next election, do not get me wrong. However, it has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience and I would recommend being a member of Parliament to anyone in the country.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, very briefly, I would like to thank the member for his speech, his passion and on the note he just went out on, I would just like to say congratulations to him.

Yes, he is number one on how they vote, and yes, he is quite well out there. As a matter of fact, I am number two and I am closing in. Well, not really.

He does not get paid by the word, but he certainly does invest a great amount of time in his work. I have yet to see the man stand in this House and off the cuff try to talk about something he knows nothing about. He is always well prepared. I hope he has a wonderful summer.

But he should look out. I am number two and I am going for number one, although I do not know if there is enough time in this session to do that. Nonetheless, I wish him a great summer. I look forward to hearing him again when we come back in the fall.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member. I really appreciate my time with the member, too. I expect we will talking to one another many more times in this House.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do note that the member is up in the House quite a bit. I wonder how much dead air we would have in this place if he were not here. There is certainly lots of hot air.

I listened to the speech. I did not get an opportunity to ask a question of the member for Papineau when he made his intervention. I was in a conversation with the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

What I heard and what I see in this motion today is nothing but platitudes. To me voters demand substance. I may not agree with the member, but I would agree with the previous member who said that he comes in well researched, with substance and argues his points. I often disagree with him.

However, I was absolutely astounded by the speech that went on for 10 minutes and dealt with zero substance. Voters want substance, not platitudes.

I would ask the hon. member if he thinks this motion today is really about platitudes and has absolutely nothing to do with the substance that voters want to see from this House.

● (1800)

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I think the Liberals made an error, but all parties could do that.

It is not up to us to tell them what they should choose for their opposition motions. Parties have the right to pick and choose their own battles. This was probably not the proper subject for them to be battling today. There are a lot of other topics that they could have picked. I mentioned MS as an example. There is unemployment and a lot of different issues that could be discussed.

I just think it was the wrong choice.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sharing my time with the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

I rise today to speak to this motion on prorogation that has been proposed by the hon. member for Wascana. This motion calls for a study of the issues related to prorogation, including the examination of the nature of any rule changes that may be necessary to avoid a future misuse of prorogation.

Many of my colleagues have already pointed out that the procedure and House affairs committee has been studying this issue for the past three months. It has heard from 16 witnesses, constitutional experts and others, who have overwhelmingly recommended that we not do anything to change the rules regarding prorogation because we could inadvertently make the situation worse.

I would note that prorogation is a legitimate tool for resetting Parliament and it allows the opportunity to consult with Canadians. From that perspective, prorogation has been extremely useful to our government to deal with the economic circumstances of the past year. While opposition members were on the Hill during that time talking to each other, many of my colleagues on this side of the House were talking to Canadians about the real issues they were facing, economic issues and other issues they were concerned about.

Rather than revisit many of the points that have already been made so well by my colleagues on this side of the House, I would like to illustrate some of the activities I was involved in during the last weeks of January and into February while Parliament was prorogued.

I had the opportunity to meet with a number of grade five and six students in my riding. It was interesting to hear how engaged and interested they are in what happens in Parliament.

Then there was a very sad time. I attended the funeral of Yvonne Martin, who was one of the members of a work team that travelled to Haiti. She was a nurse. She was the first Canadian whose body was recovered from the rubble. My community rallied in support of the Martin family at that time. An overwhelmingly large number of people turned out for her funeral, to pay their respects and to thank Yvonne for her efforts in helping the people of Haiti. I can say that from her example, many others are continuing to travel to Haiti with short-term mission teams to help rebuild that devastated country.

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On another day I had breakfast with the Mennonite Economic Development Associates, which is an agency that does micro-credit work in many of the developing countries. That agency provides very small loans to entrepreneurs in Afghanistan and other countries.

For example, a mother might get a loan of \$100 or \$200 to purchase a sewing machine, after which she is able to sew garments for her family and to sell. Before long, she has enough money not only to repay her loan so that the money can be sent off to another person who needs a loan, but she can hire some of her own family and community members, and the cycle continues. Another job is created and there is another opportunity for economic development so people in developing countries can be provided opportunities, not for a handout that will help them for a short time, but to actually change their lives for good.

That same day, I had lunch with the Community Futures Development Corporation board in my riding. In the morning I met with a micro-credit agency that does international development work and later in the same day I had the opportunity to meet with the Community Futures Development Corporation which provides micro-credit here at home. It provides loans, capital, to entrepreneurs to allow them to expand their businesses and in the process create jobs.

The number of jobs that have been created through the Community Futures Development Corporation in the rural areas of Canada is simply amazing. This is one of the best stories that we should be telling. It is creating opportunities to help entrepreneurs expand and create more jobs.

Later that week, I spoke at a church in my riding and then I participated in Family Literacy Day. It was great to learn about the opportunities being given to young people to develop their literacy skills.

● (1805)

One of the things that I enjoy most about my time in the riding is attending new citizen ceremonies. People who have lived in Canada for three or more years have applied for citizenship and now comes the big day when they come to the ceremony to be sworn in as new citizens. There is nothing like standing in front of a group of 50 new citizens as they raise their hands and take the oath of Canadian citizenship, to see the joy in their eyes, and to listen to them sing *O Canada* after that ceremony. There is very little about my job that I enjoy more than going to those new citizenship ceremonies and welcoming them. Afterwards there is the opportunity to speak not only to them and their family members, but to many of the community members who helped them in their journey. Maybe they came as refugees. Maybe they came as immigrants with a job. In every case, they have had someone here who has walked with them through those first weeks, months and years to get established here in Canada. It is a great opportunity to thank those people on behalf of the Government of Canada.

I also had the opportunity to tour a number of businesses in my riding, to listen to their concerns about taxation.

Business of Supply

I visited a farm in our area that is doing great work. The people in the agriculture community really are unsung heroes in many ways, with the high quality food and the consistent supply of safe food they provide for Canadians. It is amazing to see the work that these people do.

Then that afternoon, I visited a company called Intelligent Mechatronic Systems. This company creates a little gadget that fits in a car. When a BlackBerry is inserted into it, it reads people's emails as they are travelling. With the new laws in Ontario, people are not able to use their cell phones as they are driving. This little machine will answer the cell phone, and will read emails out loud. People can actually read an email into the machine and it will send that email on. The technology is simply astounding.

Again, another opportunity I had that week was to tour Elmira Pet Products.

I also met with a number of different constituents for appointments in my riding.

Then that evening, I was able to give a speech to the German Canadian Business and Professional Association.

The next day, I met for breakfast with Nursing on the International Front. It is a group which is doing nursing in developing countries, great work.

Then I had the opportunity that afternoon to work at the Mennonite Central Committee packing relief kits for Haiti and to see the number of volunteers who were working together to put together the relief kits, packing towels, soap and toothpaste, the essentials that people in Haiti needed. The interesting part about packing these kits is that they were not being packed in cardboard boxes or something that would be thrown out. They were being packed in five-gallon plastic pails with a snap lid so that after the materials were used from within the pail, the pail could be used to get water. We know how important it is to have clean water. Those pails would be put to great use.

Then I served two days, while Parliament was prorogued, holding passport clinics in my riding. This is an opportunity to offer a service to our constituents who may not have access to passport clinics in the middle of the city. Over 200 passport applications were processed during those two days. People's photos were taken. They were helped with filling out the applications. We know how intimidating it can be when confronted with all that paper. Where does one start? At the end of the process the applications were put into envelopes, sealed, and they were brought to Ottawa. Three weeks later, people got their passports. It was a great response.

I could go on. I hosted a number of coffee talks during that time, as well. I heard from ordinary Canadians about their concerns. One of their main concerns was taxation for small businesses. They do not want a tax system that burdens them and that is a disincentive to creating jobs.

To conclude, I would like to urge members to strongly oppose the motion that is before us today. For one thing, as I said when I started out, this motion is totally redundant. The committee on procedure and House affairs has done its study. We are almost ready to write a report.

● (1810)

To waste all the energy and time the committee, our chairman, and the members across the way have put in, and the expense to call those witnesses back to this place and to redo the report is simply redundant.

I urge members to please reject this motion.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech. I know that we cannot pick the motion for the other parties, but I would like the member's opinion on why he thinks the Liberal Party did not pick an opposition day motion on jobs, for example, or CPP, health care, or MS. The Liberals had a good discussion the other night about MS. They could have talked about the oil sands, which comes up a lot here in the House of Commons. They could even have talked about the blue ribbon panel they set up with the Conservatives after prorogation.

I would like the hon. member to tell me what he thinks about the choice of the opposition day motion.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, it is always dangerous on this side of the House to speculate as to what members on the other side are thinking. In this case, I would simply say that I do not know if they were thinking. If they were, they certainly were not communicating with each other.

As has been pointed out on a number of occasions today, not only is the Liberal Party represented at that committee, but its deputy House leader, its whip, and its deputy whip are the primary personnel on it.

I totally agree with my colleague. I do not know why we are not discussing the economic situation, which we know is fragile. We are on a good journey, but we cannot take it for granted. I do not know how many questions we have had on the economy all session from the Liberal Party, but they have been few.

It does concern me that we are not really facing the issues that are important to Canadians, especially the Canadians I am hearing from in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member says that we have not talked about the economy, but the economy speaks for itself. The government had a surplus when it was elected in 2006, and destroyed it. Now we have a \$50 billion plus deficit, the biggest in our history.

When the government has to borrow over \$1 billion to finance the fake lake and the G8 and G20 summits, when it has to borrow money to give corporate tax cuts to companies that already have some of the lowest corporate tax rates in the world, I have to wonder if this is proper fiscal management. I would say that it is not.

The member is suggesting that the economy is not an issue in this place. It does not have to be stated in this House each and every day, because it speaks for itself.

● (1815)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I was going to thank my colleague for the question, but to be honest, I really did not hear a question there.

Business of Supply

It really puzzles me that every time the Liberal Party talks about the economic situation in a negative way, those members forget to mention the \$37 billion that this government paid down on our national debt. They also conveniently forget to come up with answers as to how that \$39 million went missing. As far as we know, it is still in the pockets of Liberals across this country.

Those are economic questions that the people of Canada really care about. I have not heard any reasonable explanation. We have been calling for it for many months. I think it is time the member provided an answer to Canadians.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's excellent speech.

I remember in the 2006 election campaign, when then Prime Minister Paul Martin was campaigning on the notion of removing the notwithstanding clause from the Constitution, which we thought was pure folly. The whole reason it is there is because Alberta Premier Peter Lougheed thought it was a good idea so that in case there was tyranny of the majority of provinces, a province would be able to opt out of any federal statute.

Again we see the notion of prorogation being discussed here today. Prorogation is a tool used by the prime minister. It has been used throughout the history of our constitutional monarchy to relieve the situation of tyranny of the majority, which we have in the opposition parties.

I just wonder if the member for Kitchener—Conestoga could elaborate as to why it would be such a foolish idea to mess with these tools.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, not only would it be foolish to mess with the tools, and I am going to read a couple of comments from our experts on that, but what would really be foolish would be to create a duplicate committee tasked with the very same thing the procedure and House affairs committee has been studying for three months. It has heard from 16 witnesses and has spent all that energy and time.

All parties are represented. We have been working very well. Our chair has been applauded many times today for his good work on that committee. The NDP member has—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I will have to stop the member there. His time is expired. I am as disappointed as he is.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “do not steal my money, and do not waste my money” was the instructive advice I was sent to Ottawa with when I was elected on June 28, 2004. That is probably the reason I was elected, because the previous government had stolen some money and had wasted lots of money. Seriously, I do not want to talk about stolen money, because Mr. Justice Gomery looked after that. We know that there was some money misappropriated. It is gone. Gomery has decided that, and that is over. I do not want to talk about that.

Let us talk about wasted money. My constituents said to me, “We will elect you, Guy, but you had better not steal our money or waste

our money, because we do not want another \$1 billion HRDC boondoggle”. They told me that if they ever caught me involved in anything like that, I would be de-elected really quick. They talked about a \$2 billion gun registry, a total waste of money, and they said, “If you get into that kind of government, there is no way that you will ever be re-elected”.

That is what I was sent to Ottawa with. I get here, and what do we have here now? We have a motion that we have been discussing for I do not know how long, all day, hours and hours. Three hundred and eight members are seized with this here today. The opposition has suggested that we should talk about prorogation for six hours. We have been discussing it for three months. Where have those people been? It is incredible.

My constituents and their constituents said do not waste the money. They are wasting money. What is it about this that they do not understand?

I thought—

• (1820)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order. I know that members may be anxious about what might happen later on this evening, but I think the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry would appreciate a little bit of quiet so that he can finish his remarks. I promise members that there will be an opportunity to ask questions or make comments when he is finished his speech.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, I seriously wanted to try to understand why we should be discussing prorogation today. I thought about that. When I found out that this was the motion that was put before the House as the opposition day motion, I wondered why they would do that.

Then it occurred to me that if I was in opposition and was over there, and I was looking at a government that had created 300,000 jobs, had been recognized around the world as a leader in economics, and had the best economy in the world right now, if I were sitting over there looking at a government that had accomplished that, I would try to change the channel.

Out of desperation, what would we think of? I would have thought of something better than prorogation, I must admit. However, the Liberals do not want to talk about lower taxes. They want to raise taxes. They do not want to talk about the fact that now the average family of four pays \$3,000 less in taxes than when we took over four years ago. There is no word about that.

If they had used the economy as something they wanted to discuss today, they would have had to give us accolades. They would have had to say that the government is darn effective. Therefore, they talked about prorogation.

What about crime? Why did the Liberals not come up with something on crime? Why did they not come up with something about the faint hope clause or something along those lines? That would have made some sense. However, to pick prorogation, nobody can believe that. Talk about the faint hope clause, that is really faint hope. I am not trying to be funny. This is serious.

Business of Supply

Three hundred and eight members have been sent here to not steal money and to not waste money. The Liberals should be ashamed of themselves and the fact that we have talked about prorogation, because they have wasted a terrible amount of taxpayers' money on this day. This has been a total waste of the taxpayers' money.

You have to go home. You are heading home tonight—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I just want to remind the member to address his comments through the chair and not directly to other members.

Everyone else, just hold off on the questions and comments until the member is done his speech.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. I got carried away. The truth of the matter is that each and every one of the 308 members here, including the Liberals, are going to go back to their constituencies this evening or tomorrow. We are going to have to face our constituents. When I talk to the people who sent me here who said to me “do not steal my money and do not waste my money”, I am going to be able to say that I did not steal their money, and I did not waste it. I did not suggest that we talk about prorogation today, on June 17, just to have something to do so that I would not have to give credit to a good functioning government that created 300,000 jobs. We are in a recession, and the government has created 300,000 jobs.

When we, the 308 members, go back to our ridings, how are we going to explain that we spent all this time today, June 17, talking about prorogation? I do not know how we are going to explain that.

This motion and the three-month study on prorogation is a terrible waste of taxpayers' money. This debate was totally unnecessary. I am going to go back to my riding, and I am going to tell my constituents that I did not want to do this.

I was forced to do this by an opposition that is totally leaderless. If I were in the opposition and I had the leader they have, I would want to talk about prorogation. I would talk about anything other than leadership. This is a party bankrupt of ideas, totally bankrupt. The best they can come up with on the last day of this session is prorogation. That is the best topic they could come up with.

I am going to ask each and every one of the 308 members to go back to our ridings and say to every one of our constituents, “I promise that I will not waste your money and I will not steal it, and we will never discuss prorogation again in this House.”

● (1825)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member said that he did not want to be funny but his opening statement was especially funny when he said “don't waste my time and don't waste my money”. I would like the member to comment on the time that was wasted when the government was prorogued. We probably wasted three or four months. We could have spent the time passing bills on crime. We could have spent time talking about the unemployed.

He talked about wasting money. I would like him to comment on the money that is being wasted in the riding of the industry minister on a boat that does not float, toilets that will never be used and a

sidewalk that goes nowhere. What kind of waste is that? Is that not wasting money?

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, I find it terribly unfortunate that the member wasted time when the House was not sitting. When I leave here tonight and go to my constituency tomorrow, I will not be wasting time.

When the House was prorogued, our ministers were travelling across this country and asking Canadians how we could get out of this recession. We must have gotten it right because 300,000 jobs were created in the last eight months. He may call creating 300,000 jobs for Canadians wasting time but I do not.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member reminds me of my old profession of being a TV weatherman. I have no doubt that he would stand in the House on a beautiful sunny day and take credit for that, too. I am sure he would and, by goodness, maybe he should.

I have a quick question for him. He emphatically said that they sent him here not to waste their money and time. Why did they shut down the House for so many months when so many people were against it?

I have a better one and it is very specific. When we do this, we can all start a wave in praise of all 308 members of Parliament. He does not want to waste the money. This is a simple question with a yes or no answer. Will you say yes to the Auditor General going into your office on Monday? Yes or no?

The Deputy Speaker: I just reminded the government member and I will remind the opposition member not to address comments directly at colleagues but through the Chair.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that reminder. I want to remind you that when I started my comments, I said, “Do not steal my money and do not waste it”. I also said that the reason I was sent here is that the former government stole the money and the former government wasted the money, and I have examples. As a matter of fact, I gave proof. I gave the Gomery inquiry, commissioned by a former Liberal prime minister, which declared that \$39 million were missing and that the Liberal Party was responsible for it.

● (1830)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:30 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the opposition motion.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 81(18), the division stands deferred until later this day.

It being 6:30 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, we will now proceed to main estimates.

* * *

MAIN ESTIMATES, 2010-11

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC) moved:

That the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011, less the amounts voted in interim supply, be concurred in.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank members on this side of the House and on the other side. This is an important issue that we need to deal with regarding the appropriation of moneys so that the government can do the things it has committed to do.

As the House is aware, we are on track with our budget this year to see our deficit eliminated. We are moving toward a balanced budget in the year 2014 and, obviously, to carry out the plans we have in place right now, these appropriations have to come forward.

We are doing a number of things this year. We have announced that about a third of all government departments and agencies will undergo each year what is called a strategic review, and, in that review, we will look for savings of 5% from each of those departments and agencies. Our estimation is that savings will yield this year about \$1.7 billion. We can say that with some confidence because last year, when we went through a similar exercise with departments and agencies, we actually wound up with savings of about \$287 million. This year the group of departments and agencies that will go through this exercise are considerably larger and, therefore, we will see a larger return on that 5%.

We also want to continue with our economic action plan, but we have indicated that this being the second year of the plan, this would be the last year of the plan for the stimulus spending.

We said at the beginning of the global downturn that the stimulus spending that we would introduce would help our economy through this time of global downturn, and we knew we would take on a deficit to do that, but we were also very clear in saying that this would be temporary. Members will see the \$19 billion that will go into the stimulus spending for this year, 2010-11, but that will end at the end of this fiscal year, which will help us because that will be \$19 billion coming out of the deficit right there that will help us move toward a balanced budget.

We also announced, although it does not often get talked about, that we have gone into an operational freeze of all government operational spending, not just this year but for the next two years. That is three years in a row where there will not be an increase in government spending on the operational side. That also means that

Business of Supply

the salaries of members of Parliament on both sides of the House, of cabinet ministers and the salary of the Prime Minister will be frozen.

We are taking a number of steps to move us toward a balanced budget. We are also freezing all hospitality and travel at 2009 levels. So we are taking a number of steps to ensure we hit that target of a balanced budget.

We need the moneys in this appropriation, specifically in terms of dollars under these votes, one of approximately \$1 billion, to address programs for vulnerable people; another of approximately \$1 billion for a knowledge infrastructure program because we want to ensure that continues; and the \$3 billion are to go on with issues related to our infrastructure that is still in need. We will continue infrastructure spending in a planned way over the time ahead, even though we plan to eliminate the \$19 billion at the end of this year. The approximately \$5.4 billion that we are asking for today in appropriations will be for the EI payments.

When we really look at it, about 45% of what we will be doing is related to these programs and spending on social programs, spending on programs for people.

One of the very distinct differences between our method of getting to a balanced budget as opposed to the former Liberal government, which achieved a balanced budget in the mid-nineties, its main reductions and cuts per se were in transfers to provinces and the virtually overnight slashing in health care spending by 30%. We are not doing that. We are looking at our own government spending. We think that is the responsible way to do this, which is why we are taking that particular approach.

About \$259 billion is the actual expenditure that we are looking at in these appropriations. The full amount will be \$261.2 billion but there will be a decrease of \$2.2 billion in non-budgetary expenses that are related to certain loans and investments.

● (1835)

We want to see this achieved because we need this money to continue to run the affairs of government and take care of programs for people.

The finance committee of the Senate has also looked at these expenditures. Officials have reported there on that particular part of the program.

Some people might ask what the purpose is of bringing in restraint measures and having a balanced budget. We are still on a program to reduce our taxes right through to the year 2012 on the corporate side. We laid out a long term plan for that over two years ago.

We have sent a signal, not just to Canadians but to those around the world that we are reducing debt. We have the lowest debt to GDP ratio of all the developed nations. We are reducing deficit. We have the lowest deficit to GDP ratio of all developed nations. We have the lowest and most competitive tax on the business side, small, medium and large businesses, among the G8 countries. We sent the message out that we are holding the line on spending.

Business of Supply

What is the result of that? The result is that around the world, where we know there are large pools of capital twitching, looking to where they should be investing, they are looking for places of confidence, places of fiscal predictability and places where the government has things under control.

We can talk about that here and we know that here but when we say it, it gets very little response, especially from across the way, even when it is good news. However, where it gives credibility is when we get the evaluations from agencies, organizations and individuals outside of the country.

The Economist Intelligence Unit says that we are an economic star among other countries. The OECD says that Canada's economy shines among all other countries. The International Monetary Fund says that Canada is best positioned coming out of this particular downturn.

We have seen close to 310,000 new jobs since last July. Even as I say this, some in the opposition are shaking their head, in contempt I guess because we are in such good shape. However, I want to add a couple of warnings. This is a fragile global recovery. Canada is doing well but it is fragile and we must continue to take care. That is why we are resisting so many of the requests for wild increases in spending that come from the opposition and why we are resisting the Liberals and the NDP when they say that we should move to a 45-day work year, that we should allow Canadians to work for 45 days and then get EI benefits for the rest of the year.

We have to resist that kind of thinking that got countries, like Greece, into the difficulties they are in today. We are proud of the record that we have established. We are attracting attention and we are seeing the investment from other countries come to Canada.

Last year's investment from China alone, foreign direct investment into Canada, was \$8.8 billion. That is almost a 70% increase from the year before. The head of the largest investment bond fund in the world just recently said that he was advising his institutional investors and clients to look to Canada as the place of stability to invest.

It was only a few weeks ago that Russia announced that to shore up its own currency it would be buying Canadian dollars.

One after another, the endorsements from outside of our country continue to come in that we are on the right track, that Canadians can have some sense of security about that and that Canada is the place to be, which is what these appropriations are all about tonight.

● (1840)

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the estimates, but I would also like to speak to what the minister had to say during his speech.

First, the fact that we have the lowest debt to GDP ratio is thanks to the Liberal government and the hard work it did during the 1990s and 2000. I would like to remind the minister that the increases we are seeing now in the debt to GDP ratio is actually increasing under his watch.

I would also remind him that the best banking system in the world, the most secure, is due to the fact that the Liberal government of the

day made sure we had the proper regulations. The minister well realizes and recognizes that it was his party that actually wanted to deregulate the banking system, which would have caused havoc, but thankfully the Liberal government at the time did not do so.

I would remind the minister that he indeed has the highest spending government in the record of our country. The highest deficit that this country has ever seen in a budget came from the Conservative government.

Let me get back to the estimates. The estimates is a process by which Parliament approves the overall numbers and the general purpose for the funds. The actual spending of that money is up to cabinet ministers who represent the Government of Canada and taxpayers. The government has shown time and time again that waste, mismanagement and overspending is its creed.

The worst example is the money spent by the government on the G8 and G20 summits. It is simply staggering. Both the Auditor General and the Parliamentary Budget Officer have said they are going to investigate the spending, both the large amount of money being spent and how it is being spent.

The costs for this three-day summit, 72 hours, are higher than the costs of security for the entire 2010 Vancouver Olympics, at which there were hundreds upon hundreds of athletes and weeks upon weeks of events, and still for a 72-hour meeting, the government is still spending more money.

It is almost six times the approximate \$190 million spent for the two-day G8 summit in Alberta in 2002. This summer Canadians are watching the World Cup in South Africa. FIFA, the organizer of the World Cup, is spending roughly the same amount of money for a month-long tournament that the government is spending and it provides significantly tourism revenue to South Africa. The same amount of money for a month is being spent for 72 hours. It is almost more than 20 times the total reported cost for the April 2009 G20 summit in London, not that long ago, which is astounding, and much higher than the security costs at any previous summit.

The Gleneagles G8 summit in Scotland in 2005, for example, was reported to have spent \$110 million on security, while the estimate for the 2008 G8 gathering in Japan was \$381 million. That is a long way away from the \$1 billion plus, the loonie boondoggle, as *The Economist* magazine calls it.

In particular, when looking at specific expenditures, it seems the Minister of Industry has led the charge in the Conservative cabinet. This minister and this government spent \$.25 million building a toilet 20 kilometres away from the meeting site. He built a gazebo at a cost of over \$100,000, more than an hour's drive away from the meetings.

He spent nearly \$400,000 refurbishing a steamboat that world leaders will not see because it will not be ready until weeks after the leaders have left. It is not just a steamboat that will not be ready. Close to \$7 million of G8 projects, and counting, are not even complete.

What about the spending in the city of Toronto, site of the G20 meeting? The \$1.9 million fake lake has clearly outraged Canadians and with good reason. Lake Ontario is a mere 850 metres away and the government chose to spend money recreating Muskoka in downtown Toronto rather than any number of investments.

Another example, one which really gets my blood boiling, is the money that was spent on a fake wooden lighthouse. It is part of a tree stump and it is part of the G8-G20 spending. At the same time, the current government has announced plans to sell off or scrap lighthouses across Canada, close to 1,000 in all.

• (1845)

The Cape Spear Lighthouse is in my riding of St. John's South—Mount Pearl. Cape Spear is a symbol of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, a marker of the most easterly point in North America, an iconic welcoming beacon to North America. The people of St. John's South—Mount Pearl are clearly concerned that the government would threaten the Cape Spear Lighthouse. Instead of focusing on maintaining such important symbols of our country, the government has spent money building a fake version for world leaders some 40 kilometres away from the summit site.

I cannot go on without mentioning the massive inconvenience to the residents of Toronto because of summit-related disruptions. By moving the G20 into downtown Toronto, the government not only massively increased the cost to taxpayers of hosting these summits to the tune of \$400 million, but also caused many businesses to have to close up shop. Bay Street has been disrupted. Productions in the theatre district have been cancelled. The Toronto Blue Jays had to leave town.

All of these disruptions will have a significant economic impact on businesses in Toronto and are added costs to the summit. Allow me to go on and elaborate on this because it is so detrimental to Toronto, not only from a life perspective but from a tourism perspective. We now learn that the government of the United States has put out a travel advisory to the city of Toronto because of the G8 and G20.

With all this money going out the door for questionable items the government's plan to tame the deficit seems to raise more questions than it does answers. To give an idea of the magnitude of the task at hand, the Conservatives have increased program spending from \$175.2 billion to \$237.8 billion in their first four budgets. That is a 26% increase. That is a lot of money. It is \$62 billion. Imagine if they had spent it on things to help Canadians.

The government says it has a plan to fight the deficit it created. It can simply freeze departmental operating budgets and let public servants determine what services should be cut and reduced as inflation and population growth squeezes their bottom lines. Allow me to tell members about the Public Works and Government Services officials who came before the operations committee of which I am a member. They came before us and said the freeze will affect \$8.7 million. That is a very small amount of the billions upon billions that Public Works and Government Services utilizes. When we look at the freeze, it is only a freeze on \$8.7 million. It is not going to yield the kind of numbers that are required.

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Now we have learned that there is a very complex process by which public servants can gain up to an additional \$10,000 and get their suggestions reviewed by a complex process put forward by the public service to find savings. As I stated in the House, if the government needs some assistance in eliminating wasteful spending, it could just start with the fake lake. That will save it a lot of money and we can go on.

Conservatives have been spending a heck of a lot of money, for example, on management consultants. If they were to look at all the money they spent on the wasteful G8 and G20 projects, they would be well ahead. But, it is also important to highlight that the government continues to spend huge amounts of money on self-promotion and advertising. For example, in supplementary estimates A, the government has asked to spend an additional \$30 million. This is in addition to the budget amount. This is another place government could save money and instead put it to good use for Canadians.

Allow me to give a run-up as to how much money the government has been spending in advertising. In 2004-05 the amount was \$49.5 million. In 2005-06 it went down a little bit to \$41 million. In 2006-07 it skyrocketed to \$86.9 million and it continued to rise since then. Last year it spent \$89 million. So let me go back and give those numbers again. In 2005-06, when the government came into power, it was \$41.3 million. It has now gone up to \$89 million.

All this at a time when Canadians have the highest debt on a per household basis according to the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada. The average debt load of Canadians is \$41,740 each. That is the worst among the 20 advanced countries in the OECD—

• (1850)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I will have to stop the member there. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Hochelaga.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a budget is an important and powerful event in the life of a government. And this is my first federal budget in as a member of this House.

Of course, I have seen them prepared and defended in the National Assembly. I have also commented on budgets from both Quebec and Canada on information networks, but never here. This is my first budget and these are my first budget estimates.

We are disappointed because we did not hear the word “Quebec” mentioned in the speeches from the President of the Treasury Board and our Liberal colleague. It was not mentioned once; they are ignoring us.

Business of Supply

I see that members on the other side appear happy with this budget. Good for them. This is their budget, not ours. A budget prepared by someone else does not interest us. The Liberals and the NDP can say that they would have done it differently, improving this and deleting that. They see themselves reflected in it. Even though they have differences, they see themselves in it, but we do not. Immediately after the minister's budget speech, I made my first comment, which the minister commented on. It was about the word "rien". He understood the translation, which was "nothing". There was nothing for the marginalized, nothing for informal caregivers, nothing for pensioners, nothing for housing, nothing for the homeless. Volunteers got a medal with a picture of the Prime Minister on it. There were a few crumbs and there was nothing about the environment. They created a new structure to eliminate structures. That is what the government did in this budget.

I concluded by saying that we deserved better and that we did not get it.

The President of the Treasury Board has finished his work. He showed us that we did not get what we wanted. One hundred and five days after the budget speech, my sovereigntist beliefs and convictions have only become stronger. Quebec would be much better off if it had full powers. The minister said that Canada's economy shines. Where? Certainly not in Hochelaga.

At the start of the 1990s, 20 years ago, some middlemen tried to get us to sign the minimum agreements at Meech Lake. Obviously, this planted the seeds of hope, and then, when hopes were dashed, despair set in. Unbelievably, these middlemen—I will say it again—missed their mark. In 1995, I was there. In the 1995 referendum, were it not for a theft—yes, I will call it that—that has been well documented since then, we would have won our independence. If the process had truly been democratic, we would have had our sovereignty, but because this is a democracy, we accepted the result of the referendum campaign without pulling out our guns.

But the Bloc Québécois does not want to be paranoid. We must look what our reality is in 2010. We can forget about seeing an offer from Canada that addresses the aspirations and needs of Quebecers. We are being told to act like doormats and let everyone walk all over us. That's it, that's all. But we say no, never.

Seven months ago the House Clerk returned the writs from my election to Parliament and after seven months—that should be five months, since there was a two-month lockout—I have to say that by coming here, I know Canadians and their representatives better. They are fine people. Canada is not a gulag; it is not Mongolia, but it is still a country that does not belong to us.

A recent, widely-published survey by academics and the media showed that 62% of Canadians do not want to reach out to Quebec. They are not interested. And we are supposed to wait for them to extend a hand? Come on, it will never happen.

● (1855)

Reforming Canada is an illusion. We do not want just a special status, but they do not want to give us anything more. They do not want to give us new powers; they will even erode the powers that we have in our own jurisdictions, for example, with the securities commission. They are stealing our authority. Canada is building a

country. Let them do it their way and according to their ideals, but we do not want this country.

Canada is the way it is, and we do not see ourselves in it. It is like the budget. We need to make Quebec what we want it to be. Twenty years after the Meech Lake accord, the only notable change is that we need to build Quebec the way we want to and not wait for results from the others because they do not want to give them to us. Nation building is often done through Quebec bashing, which is unacceptable to us.

Language, culture, communications, citizenship, immigration. That is what we want to control. But there are no offers from the other side, no new powers. They should at least respect what we have. I talked about the national securities commission which runs counter to the wishes of the National Assembly, corporate Quebec, other provinces and international opinion. We are told that they do not want to have the massive mobilization that is occurring in Quebec. They are digging in their heels more and more.

Given that new offers and new powers are not forthcoming, we would at least expect them to pay the bills. They are not even doing that. They refuse to pay \$2.2 billion to Quebec for tax harmonization; they refuse to give Hydro-Québec the \$250 million per year paid to Ontario Hydro; they refuse to put a cap on equalization, which represents \$337 million; they refuse to give Quebec \$238 million in equalization payments given to other provinces; they have not yet paid the \$137 million case we won in 1991 in the court of appeal and the administrative tribunal.

The thinking is clear. We must take control of our destiny. We must build a country where French will truly be appreciated. We want to control our immigration and citizenship policies. We do not wish to just defend and support our culture, we want to help it develop.

Meanwhile, the Bloc is not getting these allocations. The Conservatives will stand behind their allocations. That is fine, but we will steadfastly oppose them. For their part, the Liberals do not know where they are and therefore do not know where they are going.

A certain number of items have already been discussed in this House and I will conclude by stating that they cannot walk all over us, that we are not paranoid, that Canada is not Mongolia, that we will not get out our guns, that we have said no to the middlemen and that it is time to adjourn. And all this, to a House of Commons as it rises.

But tomorrow, what will the headlines in Quebec say? Halak has been traded for two unknowns.

● (1900)

[English]

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak in the debate on Bill C-44, which would approve \$260 billion of public spending.

The G20 summit has yet to begin and already downtown Torontonians are suffering. People are writing to me about how outraged they are that the government has the gall to waste \$1 billion of their hard-earned tax dollars that could have been much better spent. One person wrote, “It makes me feel absolutely nauseous and furious that my tax dollars are being so callously wasted. I am a senior, on a fixed pension, who lives on a budget, and when my bank account is in deficit I would not dream of throwing huge lavish events to impress foreign friends, acquaintances, and their entourages”.

Another person wrote to me about the unfairness of the employment insurance system. I note that employment insurance is in this bill. This person used to work for CTV. After being employed full time for 20 years, he was laid off. Although he diligently paid his employment insurance premiums, his benefits are being cut off because there is a limit on the amount of time that a person can be on EI, regardless of how much the person has paid into the system. He would have been better off stashing his EI premiums under his mattress than counting on the government to be fair. In essence, although he paid into EI for 20 years, he cannot access his own money because the government needs a fake lake, multiple gazebos and toilets.

Then there is the issue of compensation. Thus far the government is refusing outright to reimburse home and business owners for property damage. It is refusing to reimburse them even though in the \$260 billion budget we are debating, there is \$1 billion for the G8 and G20 summits. They were told that payment would not be provided for losses and damages that are insurable under normal insurance coverage.

The government is so out of touch with the lives of ordinary Canadians. It does not understand that once a claim is submitted, the premiums skyrocket. What the government does not seem to get is that ordinary Canadians are still climbing out of the recession and cannot afford any increase in monthly expenses.

I asked the minister in question period today why the government refused to commit to providing compensation for damages suffered because of the G20. His response was that the government was not “legally bound to pay compensation”.

The government may not be legally bound to pay compensation, but how can it not believe it is morally bound to provide compensation to small business owners and condo owners, whose livelihood and homes are at stake, and for what? For little more than a glorified photo op. There is little action to tackle climate change and little action to make poverty history.

Right at the peak of Toronto's tourist season, the United States has issued a travel alert warning its citizens not to visit Toronto during the G20 summit.

Small businesses in the city depend on tourist dollars every year, but because of the summit, Toronto's major tourist attractions are being shut down. Gone are the 100,000 baseball fans expected to be downtown that weekend to see Doc Halladay's return to Toronto. Gone are the cultural tourists who wanted to visit the Art Gallery of Ontario that weekend. Gone are the visitors who would like to see a musical in Toronto's great entertainment district. Because of the

summit, the show will not go on. *Mamma Mia!*, what is wrong with the government?

While we have been told that loss of business will be covered, people are being asked to fill out a six-page application and to submit it into a black hole. Their application will not be acknowledged for months. Then they will be forced to wait for up to seven years to find out if their application has been approved. Seven long years. Imagine that.

● (1905)

Business owners are also expected to provide three years' proof of revenue. What about new businesses? There are a lot of new businesses in downtown Toronto in the entertainment district.

The government should apologize to working Canadians for running off on a shopping spree with our money. It should apologize to small business owners for sinking \$1 million into a fake lake but not committing a penny to compensate for property damages caused by the G20.

More important than an apology, we need a commitment from the government to take a tiny portion of the \$260 billion in this bill that is about to be approved to help compensate Torontonians in a fair and timely manner.

The minister also talked about our ranking in the OECD. I want to leave a figure with the House as we adjourn for the summer. We are ranked dead last of all the OECD countries on government investment in children and in building affordable child care. That is a true fact. We are ranked last.

Not only are we ranked last according to the OECD, we are ranked last in the UNICEF report. UNICEF said that we are doing poorly in how we work with our kids, how we invest in our children, and in trying to make poverty history for children. More and more working families are waiting fruitlessly for affordable child care.

I would say to those out of touch members of Parliament who have been heckling me for the last 10 minutes that child care in downtown Toronto that is high quality costs a total of at least \$13,000 to \$14,000 a year. Is there one single penny in this bill that will actually go to extra dollars for affordable child care? There is none whatsoever. There is no extra money to create what is desperately needed for working families today.

That is why of the OECD countries, we are dead last. Yes, it is easy for male members of Parliament to continue to heckle. They do not understand that 70% of females in this country, working mothers, need affordable child care.

Can—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order. The member raises a good point. There are a lot of secondary conversations going on. The member for Trinity—Spadina has one minute left. If we could just allow her a little bit of quiet so that she could make her points, it would be much appreciated.

Business of Supply

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, there are members of Parliament who are quite out of touch with the daily lives of Canadians, whether they are seniors who need more pension funds, or they are unemployed, or they are working parents who need affordable child care.

That is why we are not supporting this budget bill.

* * *

● (1910)

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**OPPOSITION MOTION—PROROGATION**

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It being 7:10 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[*Translation*]

Call in the members.

● (1935)

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

(*Division No. 77*)

YEAS**Members**

André	Andrews
Asselin	Bachand
Beaudin	Bellavance
Bevilacqua	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brisson	Brunelle
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Carrier
Coady	Crombie
Cuzner	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dorion
Dosanji	Dryden
Duceppe	Dufour
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Easter
Eyking	Faile
Foote	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Gaudet	Goodale
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Holland	Jennings
Kania	Kennedy
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
LeBlanc	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Malhi	Malo
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Ménard
Mendes	Minna
Mourani	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Nadeau
Oliphant	Ouellet
Pacetti	Paillé (Hochelaga)
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)	Paquette
Patry	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Proulx

Rae
Rota
Russell
Scarpaleggia
Silva
St-Cyr
Thi Lac
Valeriot
Volpe
Wrzesnewskyj

Ratansi
Roy
Savage
Sgro
Simms
Szabo
Tonks
Vincent
Wilfert
Zarac— 98

NAYS**Members**

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Arthur	Baird
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauson	Lebel
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukowski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Payne
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	

Weston (Saint John)
Woodworth
Young— 141

Wong
Yelich

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.
[English]

The next question is on the main motion.

● (1940)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 78)

YEAS

Members

Andrews
Brisson
Cannis
Crombie
Dhaliwal
Dosanjh
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Eyking
Fry
Hall Findlay
Jennings
Kennedy
Malhi
Mendes
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Olipphant
Patri
Rae
Rota
Savage
Sgro
Simms
Tonks
Volpe
Wrzesnewskyj

Bevilacqua
Byrne
Coady
Cuzner
Dhalla
Dryden
Easter
Foote
Goodale
Holland
Kania
LeBlanc
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Minna
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Pacetti
Proulx
Ratansi
Russell
Scarpaleggia
Silva
Szabo
Valeriot
Wilfert
Zarac— 50

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Armstrong
Asselin
Baird
Bellavance
Bernier
Bigras
Blais
Block
Bouchard
Boughen
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Brunelle
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cardin
Carrier
Chong
Clement
Davidson
DeBellefeuille
Del Mastro

Ablończy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
André
Arthur
Bachand
Beaudin
Benoit
Bezan
Blackburn
Blaney
Bonsant
Boucher
Bourgeois
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Cadman
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie
Casson
Clarke
Cummins
Day
Dechert
Demers

Business of Supply

Deschamps
Devolin
Dreesen
Dufour
Dykstra
Fast
Flaherty
Freeman
Galipeau
Gaudet
Glover
Goodyear
Grewal
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Harper
Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Laforest
Lake
Lauzon
Lebel
Lemieux
Lévesque
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nadeau
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Oda
Paillé (Hochelaga)
Paquette
Petit
Poilievre
Prentice
Raiet
Rathgeber
Richards
Rickford
Roy
Scheer
Shea
Shory
St-Cyr
Storseth
Sweet
Thompson
Toews
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Vincent
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Woodworth
Young— 189

Desnoyers
Dorion
Duceppe
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Faille
Finley
Fletcher
Gagnon
Gallant
Généreux
Goldring
Gourde
Guay
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laframboise
Lalonde
Lavallée
Lemay
Lessard
Lobb
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malo
McColeman
Ménard
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Mourani
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Ouellet
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Payne
Plamondon
Pomerleau
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Saxton
Schellenberger
Shipley
Sorenson
Stanton
Strahl
Thi Lac
Tilson
Trost
Uppal
Van Loan
Verner
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky)

Wong
Yelich

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Business of Supply

* * *

[English]

MAIN ESTIMATES, 2010-11

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC) moved:

That the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011, less the amounts voted in Interim Supply, be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1950)

[Translation]

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

*(Division No. 79)***YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Arthur	Baird
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)

Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauson	Lebel
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Payne
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young— 141	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Beaudin	Bellavance
Bevilacqua	Bevington
Bigras	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brisson
Brunelle	Byrne
Cannis	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coady	Comartin
Crombie	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Donnelly
Dorion	Dosanjh
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Faillie
Foote	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	Holland
Harris (St. John's East)	Hyer
Hughes	Julian
Jennings	Kennedy
Kania	Laframboise
Laforest	Lavallée
Lalonde	LeBlanc
Layton	

Business of Supply

Lemay
Lessard
Malhi
Maloway
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Masse
Ménard
Minna
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Nadeau
Ouellet
Paillé (Hochelaga)
Paquette
Plamondon
Proulx
Rafferty
Rota
Russell
Savoie
Siksay
Simms
Stoffer
Thi Lac
Tonks
Vincent
Wilfert
Zarac— 131

Leslie
Lévesque
Malo
Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Mendes
Mourani
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Oliphant
Pacetti
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Patry
Pomerleau
Rae
Ratansi
Roy
Savage
Sgro
Silva
St-Cyr
Szabo
Thibeault
Valeriot
Volpe
Wrzesnewskyj

Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Cadman
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casson
Clarke
Cummins
Day
Del Mastro
Dreesen
Dykstra
Finley
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goodyear
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lemieux
Lukowski
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Oda
Petit
Prentice
Raitt
Rathgeber
Richards
Rickford
Saxton
Schellenberger
Shipley
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Tilson
Trost
Uppal
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Woodworth
Young— 141

Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Flaherty
Galipeau
Généreux
Golding
Gourde
Harper
Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Lobb
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Payne
Poilievre
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Scheer
Shea
Shory
Stanton
Strahl
Thompson
Toews
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wong
Yelich

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved that Bill C-44, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2011, be read the first time.

(Motion deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

[Translation]

Hon. Stockwell Day moved that the bill be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you were seek it, you would find agreement to apply the vote from the previous motion to the current motion.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 80)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Benoit
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Armstrong
Baird
Bernier
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz

Allen (Welland)
Andrews
Ashton
Atamanenko
Beaudin
Bevilacqua
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Brunelle
Cannis
Carrier
Chow
Coady
Crombie
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille

NAYS

Members

André
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bellavance
Bevington
Blais
Bouchard
Brison
Byrne
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers

Business of Supply

Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Donnelly
Dorion	Dosanjh
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Faille
Foote	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Holland
Hughes	Hyer
Jennings	Julian
Kania	Kennedy
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
Malhi	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Ménard	Mendes
Minna	Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Patry
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Proulx	Rae
Rafferty	Ratansi
Rota	Roy
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Sgro
Siksay	Silva
Simms	St-Cyr
Stoffer	Szabo
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Tonks	Valeriote
Vincent	Volpe
Willfert	Wrzesnewskyj
Zarac— 131	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Mr. Andrew Scheer in the chair)

(On Clause 2)

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):
Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board if the bill is in its usual form.

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):
Mr. Chair, I am more than happy to say that, indeed, it is in its usual form.

The Chair: Shall clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 3 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 4 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 5 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 6 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 7 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Schedule 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Schedule 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Schedule 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Schedule 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Preamble agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Title agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Bill agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I rise and report the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Bill reported)

• (1955)

Hon. Stockwell Day moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I think you would find unanimous consent to apply the results of the previous motion to the current motion.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

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

(Division No. 81)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Arthur	Baird
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinoooge
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Payne
Petit	Poilievre

Business of Supply

Prentice	Preston
Raïtt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young— 141	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Beaudin	Bellavance
Bevilacqua	Bevington
Bigras	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brison
Brunelle	Byrne
Cannis	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coady	Comartin
Crombie	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Donnelly
Dorion	Dosanjh
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Faïlle
Foote	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Holland
Hughes	Hyer
Jennings	Julian
Kania	Kennedy
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
Malhi	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Ménard	Mendes
Minna	Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Patry
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Proulx	Rac
Rafferty	Ratansi

Business of Supply

Rota
Russell
Savoie
Siksay
Simms
Stoffer
Thi Lac
Tonks
Vincent
Wilfert
Zarac— 131

Roy
Savage
Sgro
Silva
St-Cyr
Szabo
Thibeault
Valeriot
Volpe
Wrzesnewskyj

Lauzon
Lemieux
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Oda
Petit
Prentice
Raitt
Rathgeber
Richards
Rickford
Saxton
Schellenberger
Shipley
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Tilson
Trost
Uppal
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Woodworth
Young— 141

Lebel
Lobb
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Payne
Poilievre
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Scheer
Shea
Shory
Stanton
Strahl
Thompson
Toews
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wong
Yelich

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Stockwell Day moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I think you will find agreement to apply the votes from the previous motion to the current motion.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 82)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Benoit
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Cadman
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casson
Clarke
Cummins
Day
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Finley
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goodyear
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Armstrong
Baird
Bernier
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Flaherty
Galipeau
Généreux
Goldring
Gourde
Harper
Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Andrews
Ashton
Atamanenko
Beaudin
Bevilacqua
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Brunelle
Cannis
Carrier
Chow
Coady
Crombie
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Dewar
Dhalla
Dorion
Dryden
Dufour
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking
Foote
Fry
Gaudet
Goodale
Guay
Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Hall Findlay
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jennings
Kania
Laforest
Lalonde
Layton
Lemay
Lessard
Malhi

André
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bellavance
Bevington
Blais
Bouchard
Brison
Byrne
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers
Desnoyers
Dhaliwal
Donnelly
Dosanjh
Duceppe
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Faillie
Freeman
Gagnon
Godin
Gravelle
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les

Holland
Hyer
Julian
Kennedy
Laframboise
Lavallée
LeBlanc
Leslie
Lévesque
Malo

Business of Supply

Maloway
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Masse
 Ménard
 Minna
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
 Nadeau
 Ouellet
 Paillé (Hochelaga)
 Paquette
 Plamondon
 Proulx
 Rafferty
 Rota
 Russell
 Savoie
 Siksay
 Simms
 Stoffer
 Thi Lac
 Tonks
 Vincent
 Wilfert
 Zarac— 131

Marston
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 Mathysen
 Mendes
 Mourani
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Oliphant
 Pacetti
 Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
 Patry
 Pomerleau
 Rae
 Ratansi
 Roy
 Savage
 Sgro
 Silva
 St-Cyr
 Szabo
 Thibeault
 Valeriote
 Volpe
 Wrzesnewskyj

Dreeshen
 Dykstra
 Finley
 Fletcher
 Gallant
 Glover
 Goodyear
 Grewal
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert
 Hoback
 Holder
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 Lemieux
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 MacKenzie
 McColeman
 Menzies
 Miller
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Oda
 Petit
 Prentice
 Raitt
 Rathgeber
 Richards
 Rickford
 Saxton
 Schellenberger
 Shipley
 Sorenson
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Tilson
 Trost
 Uppal
 Van Loan
 Verner
 Warawa
 Watson
 Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Woodworth
 Young— 141

Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Fast
 Flaherty
 Galipeau
 Gagnéux
 Goldring
 Gourde
 Harper
 Hawn
 Hill
 Hoepfner
 Jean
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Lebel
 Lobb
 Lunn
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Mayes
 McLeod
 Merrifield
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Obhrai
 Payne
 Poilievre
 Preston
 Rajotte
 Reid
 Richardson
 Ritz
 Scheer
 Shea
 Shory
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Thompson
 Toews
 Tweed
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
 Wong
 Yelich

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
 (Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A), 2010-11

The Speaker: The next question is on the motion to adopt supplementary estimates (A).

Hon. Stockwell Day moved that the supplementary estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011 be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I think you will find agreement to apply the votes from the previous motion to the current motion.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 83)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
 Aglukkaq
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Arthur
 Benoit
 Bezan
 Blaney
 Boucher
 Braid
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Cadman
 Calkins
 Cannon (Pontiac)
 Casson
 Clarke
 Cummins
 Day
 Del Mastro

Ablonczy
 Albrecht
 Allison
 Anders
 Armstrong
 Baird
 Bernier
 Blackburn
 Block
 Boughen
 Breitzkreuz
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooze
 Calandra
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Carrie
 Chong
 Clement
 Davidson
 Dechert
 Devolin

Allen (Welland)
 Andrews
 Ashton
 Atamanenko
 Beaudin
 Bevilacqua
 Bigras
 Bonsant
 Bourgeois
 Brunelle
 Cannis
 Carrier
 Chow
 Coady
 Crombie
 Cullen
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 DeBellefeuille
 Deschamps
 Dewar
 Dhalla
 Dorion
 Dryden
 Dufour
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Eyking
 Foote
 Fry

NAYS

Members

André
 Angus
 Asselin
 Bachand
 Bellavance
 Bevington
 Blais
 Bouchard
 Brison
 Byrne
 Cardin
 Charlton
 Christopherson
 Comartin
 Crowder
 Cuzner
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Demers
 Desnoyers
 Dhaliwal
 Donnelly
 Dosanjh
 Duceppe
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 Faillie
 Freeman
 Gagnon

Business of Supply

Gaudet	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Holland
Hughes	Hyer
Jennings	Julian
Kania	Kennedy
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
Malhi	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Ménard	Mendes
Minna	Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Patry
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Proulx	Rae
Rafferty	Ratansi
Rota	Roy
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Sgro
Siksay	Silva
Simms	St-Cyr
Stoffer	Szabo
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Tonks	Valeriote
Vincent	Volpe
Wilfert	Wrzesnewskyj
Zarac— 131	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved that Bill C-45, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2011, be read a first time.

(Motion deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

Hon. Stockwell Day moved that the bill be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I think you will find agreement to apply the votes from the previous motion to the current motion.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 84)

YEAS

Members

Abbott

Ablonczy

Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Arthur	Baird
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Dei Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauson	Lebel
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Payne
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Woodworth	
Young— 141	

NAYS

Members

André
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bellavance
Beverington
Blais
Bouchard

Business of Supply

Bourgeois	Brison
Brunelle	Byrne
Cannis	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coady	Comartin
Crombie	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Donnelly
Dorion	Dosanjh
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Faille
Footé	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	Holland
Harris (St. John's East)	Hyer
Hughes	Julian
Jennings	Kennedy
Kania	Laframboise
Laforest	Lavallée
Lalonde	LeBlanc
Layton	Leslie
Lemay	Lévesque
Lessard	Malo
Malhi	Marston
Maloway	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Mathysen
Masse	Mendes
Ménard	Mourani
Minna	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Oliphant
Nadeau	Pacetti
Ouellet	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Patry
Paquette	Pomerleau
Plamondon	Rae
Proulx	Ratansi
Rafferty	Roy
Rota	Savage
Russell	Sgro
Savoie	Silva
Siksay	St-Cyr
Simms	Szabo
Stoffer	Thibeault
Thi Lac	Valeriote
Tonks	Volpe
Vincent	Wrzesnewskyj
Wilfert	
Zarac— 131	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. I do now leave the chair for the House to resolve itself into committee of the whole.

(Bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Mr. Andrew Scheer in the chair)

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):
(On clause 2)

Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board whether the bill is presented in its usual form.

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Chair, I can assure this House that the bill is presented in its usual form.

[English]

The Chair: Shall Clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Clause 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Clause 3 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Clause 4 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Clause 5 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Clause 6 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Clause 7 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall schedule 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Schedule 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall schedule 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Schedule 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Business of Supply

An hon. member: On division.

(Preamble agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Title agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Bill agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I rise and report the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Bill reported)

Hon. Stockwell Day moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

• (2000)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find agreement to apply the votes from the previous motion to the current motion.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

*(Division No. 85)***YEAS****Members**

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Benoit
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Cadman
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casson
Clarke
Cummins
Day
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Finley
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goodyear
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Armstrong
Baird
Bernier
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooze
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Flaherty
Galipeau
Généreux
Goldring
Gourde
Harper
Hawn
Hill

Hoback
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lemieux
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Oda
Petit
Prentice
Raitt
Rathgeber
Richards
Rickford
Saxton
Schellenberger
Shipley
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Tilson
Trost
Uppal
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Woodworth
Young— 141

Hoeppner
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Lobb
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Payne
Poilievre
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Scheer
Shea
Shory
Stanton
Strahl
Thompson
Toews
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wong
Yelich

NAYS**Members**

Allen (Welland)
Andrews
Ashton
Atamanenko
Beaudin
Bevilacqua
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Brunelle
Cannis
Carrier
Chow
Coady
Crombie
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Dewar
Dhalla
Dorion
Dryden
Dufour
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking
Foote
Fry
Gaudet
Goodale
Guay
Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Hall Findlay
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jennings
Kania

André
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bellavance
Bevington
Blais
Bouchard
Brisson
Byrne
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers
Desnoyers
Dhaliwal
Donnelly
Dosanjh
Duceppe
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Faillie
Freeman
Gagnon
Godin
Gravelle
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Holland
Hyer
Julian
Kennedy

Business of Supply

Laforest
Lalonde
Layton
Lemay
Lessard
Malhi
Maloway
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Masse
Ménard
Minna
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Nadeau
Ouellet
Paillé (Hochelaga)
Paquette
Plamondon
Proulx
Rafferty
Rota
Russell
Savoie
Siksay
Simms
Stoffer
Thi Lac
Tonks
Vincent
Wilfert
Zarac— 131

Laframboise
Lavallée
LeBlanc
Leslie
Lévesque
Malo
Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Mendes
Mourani
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Oliphant
Pacetti
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Patry
Pomerleau
Rae
Ratansi
Roy
Savage
Sgro
Silva
St-Cyr
Szabo
Thibeault
Valeriot
Volpe
Wrzesnewskyj

Day
Del Mastro
Dreeschen
Dykstra
Finley
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goodyear
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lemieux
Lukivski
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Oda
Petit
Prentice
Raitt
Rathgeber
Richards
Rickford
Saxton
Schellenberger
Shipley
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Tilson
Trost
Uppal
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Woodworth
Young— 141

Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Flaherty
Galipeau
Généreux
Goldring
Gourde
Harper
Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Lobb
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Payne
Poilievre
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Scheer
Shea
Shory
Stanton
Strahl
Thompson
Toews
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wong
Yelich

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stockwell Day moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find agreement to apply the votes from the previous motion to the current motion.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(*Division No. 86*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Benoit
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Cadman
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casson
Clarke
Cummins

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Armstrong
Baird
Bernier
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooze
Calandra
Cannon (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson

Allen (Welland)
Andrews
Ashton
Atamanenko
Beaudin
Bevilacqua
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Brunelle
Cannis
Carrier
Chow
Coady
Crombie
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Dewar
Dhalla
Dorion
Dryden
Dufour
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking

NAYS

Members

André
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bellavance
Bevington
Blais
Bouchard
Brisson
Byrne
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers
Desnoyers
Dhaliwal
Donnelly
Dosanjh
Duceppe
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Faill

Adjournment Proceedings

Foote	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Holland
Hughes	Hyer
Jennings	Julian
Kania	Kennedy
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
Malhi	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Ménard	Mendes
Minna	Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Patry
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Proulx	Rae
Rafferty	Ratansi
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Russell	Savage
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Siksay	Silva
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Vincent	Volpe
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Zarac— 131	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it, you may find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, when the House adjourns today, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, September 20, 2010, provided that, for the purposes of Standing Order 28, it shall be deemed to have sat on Friday, June 18, Monday, June 21, Tuesday, June 22, and Wednesday, June 23, 2010.

Mr. Speaker, if the House accepts this, I would wish all hon. members a pleasant summer. Hopefully, we will not have to return to pass back-to-work legislation in the Jazz Air labour dispute.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried and I join the House leader in wishing all hon. members the very best for a pleasant summer.

(Motion agreed to)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

● (2005)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives were elected in 2006 on a platform of accountability and transparency. However, once the election was over, the Conservatives' true colours shone through: they traded in transparency and respect for deceit and intimidation.

On April 22, I asked the Conservative government why it has systematically attacked senior officials who were trying to do their job.

As usual, the Conservatives resorted to smart remarks instead of the truth. A number of watchdogs have been victims of intimidation or have been dismissed because they dared to do their job. I have some examples.

Jean-Pierre Kingsley, the former Chief Electoral Officer of Canada. The Liberals had asked the Conservatives to come clean once and for all on election financing and to shed light on some serious allegations. The Conservative Party had allegedly broken the law by exceeding the legal limit allowed during the last election campaign by more than \$1 million. There was also a dispute on the issue of political contributions received during the 2005 national convention.

As a result of these disputes with Elections Canada, Jean-Pierre Kingsley tendered his resignation after 17 years of good service. I blame the Conservative government for the resignation and the loss of this senior official who was highly respected by all, here and abroad.

Bernard Shapiro, Ethics Commissioner. The Conservatives appointed a new ethics commissioner after Mr. Shapiro held an inquiry into whether the Prime Minister employed improper means to persuade the former member for Vancouver Kingsway and Liberal minister of international trade, David Emerson, to switch parties.

Yet the Conservatives did not object to his appointment. Mr. Shapiro had a brilliant background. He was the rector and vice-chancellor of McGill University, a professor of public policy at the University of Toronto, and a deputy minister in four Ontario government ministries.

Linda Keen, chair of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. The Liberals called for an independent review of Ms. Keen's dismissal because the Prime Minister completely ignored the law when he fired her. But that criticism was motivated primarily by petty politics.

It seems that the only interests protected by that decision were the Prime Minister's political interests. He found a scapegoat. He even silenced Ms. Keen in the middle of the night, just hours before she was to appear before the House of Commons committee. The Conservatives shut Ms. Keen up instead of letting her tell the truth. What will the Conservatives do next? We are starting to see a real trend here.

Robert Marleau was Information Commissioner. After serving the House of Commons for 31 years, Robert Marleau was appointed Information Commissioner in January 2007. In June 2009, he resigned for personal reasons.

Robert Marleau had the nerve to criticize the Conservative government's lack of transparency. In his annual report, he stated that Canada had "to regain its status as a leader in the area of access to information".

Instead of changing its corporate culture, this government relied even more heavily on secrecy to prevent access to information.

The Conservatives have created a climate of fear and intimidation throughout the public service.

• (2010)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question, but I noticed that he forgot to mention the importance of our economy now that we are in a period of global uncertainty. The Prime Minister introduced an economic action plan that has created at least 300,000 jobs. We are making it easier for Canadians to save more money. We are investing in projects that create jobs in communities across Canada. Our government has the lowest deficit in the G7, in terms of our economy and our population.

These are the real issues that our constituents care about, and I invite the hon. member to also show an interest in them, to stop making personal attacks, because personal attacks like the one this member just made have never created jobs and have never created hope for Canadians. The member should be working with us to help advance our economic action plan in order to encourage hope, jobs and prosperity.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Madam Speaker, the member is mistaken. I did not make personal accusations. The Conservatives were the ones who got rid of those senior officials. I will continue.

What about Paul Kennedy, head of the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP? After four years of loyal service, the Prime Minister announced last November that he would not be renewing his contract. Why? Because in his report, Mr. Kennedy concluded that in many cases, the complaints procedures were faulty, lacking both consistency and transparency.

Who did the Conservatives appoint to take his place? A Conservative donor with no experience in criminal law or policing.

What about Peter Tinsley, chair of the Military Police Complaints Commission? The government refused to extend his mandate when the commission was right in the middle of an inquiry into the transfer of Afghan detainees who may have been tortured by local authorities. Why? Because he was critical of the potential for abuse.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Conservatives muzzled top officials at several independent government agencies. Why?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, ours is a government that is transparent, open and accountable to Canadians.

[English]

The hon. member forgot to address the real issue in his question, which is that his leader has committed to raising taxes if he takes office. He said, "We will have to raise taxes". On April 14, 2009, he said, "I will not take the GST hike off the table".

He was the founder of the Liberal carbon tax proposal. On this side we believe in lower taxes. It is an honest debate and I hope that we will carry it out into the future.

• (2015)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am standing to speak to a question I raised in the House concerning the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I know the government had indicated in the throne speech that it would take the next steps in support of the UN declaration and yet we have not seen any action.

I will begin reading a statement out of the preamble from the United Nations declaration. It states:

Convinced that the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples in this Declaration will enhance harmonious and cooperative relations between the State and indigenous peoples, based on principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith.

It would seem that kind of statement is an important reason for Canada to sign on to this declaration.

In a letter to the Prime Minister dated June 9, 2010, signed by a number of organizations, including the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the First Nations Summit from British Columbia, it outlines a number of concerns and reasons why the declaration should be signed. The letter reads:

The government announced in the Speech from the Throne that it will take steps to endorse the *Declaration* "in a manner that is fully consistent with Canada's Constitution and laws". Over 100 experts and scholars have concluded that the *Declaration* is fully consistent with the Canadian Constitution and Charter of Rights and Freedoms and it is a vital tool for their interpretation and implementation. Asserting that international human rights standards should be constrained by domestic law, contrary to the principles of international law, would detract from the value of the endorsement.

The *Declaration* includes provisions that explicitly state that any interpretation is to be balanced with other human rights protections and principles of justice and equality. Canadian officials, with Indigenous representatives, played a central role in drafting these provisions. There is no need to assert conditions or qualifications on support for the *Declaration*.

A central objective of any international human rights instrument is to encourage States to reform laws, policies and practices so that human rights are respected. International human rights standards cannot merely condone or sustain existing State practices. To limit UN declarations in this way would defeat the purpose of having international standards.

Canada has never before placed blanket qualifications on its support for international human rights instruments. To impose such limitation on the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* would constitute a discriminatory double standard.

Adjournment Proceedings

We respectfully remind the government that the *Declaration*, like all human rights declarations adopted by the General Assembly, is universally applicable to all States. For endorsement to be meaningful, it must be made in good faith with a commitment to work with Indigenous Peoples and civil society to ensure Canada lives up to the *Declaration's* standards.

Canadian courts are free to rely on the *UN Declaration* and other international instruments in interpreting Indigenous peoples' human rights. The government's endorsement of the *Declaration* is not necessary for it to be applicable in Canada.

In a recent brief to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, the Attorney General of Canada argued: "Canada's position on the Declaration has not changed. Consequently the Declaration should be given no weight as an interpretive source of law." This argument is not supportable or sustainable. If the federal government is not prepared to apply the *Declaration* as a source of interpretation of its obligations, any endorsement will be hollow and will achieve a negative response from inside and outside Canada.

There is more in this letter but they conclude by saying:

In its preamble, the *Declaration* is described as "a standard of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect".

The question still becomes: When will the government endorse the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada is a strong supporter of the various UN mechanisms devoted to indigenous issues, such as the United Nations permanent forum on indigenous issues.

This year, during the half-day session on North America, Canada was pleased to speak to what we were doing concretely to improve the situation of aboriginal peoples. The Speech from the Throne and budget 2010 contain significant commitments. We have been active in moving ahead in implementing these commitments, including our legislation on matrimonial real property, water standards and gender equity improvements with the Indian Act.

Regarding the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the government made a commitment to take steps to endorse the aspirational document in a manner consistent with Canada's Constitution and laws. The government is currently looking at how and when to best formalize its endorsement.

A growing number of states have given a commitment to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We listened with interest at the ninth session of the United Nations permanent forum on indigenous issues when New Zealand delivered its statement endorsing the declaration and the United States announced that it was reviewing its position.

We have engaged in dialogue with national aboriginal organizations, provinces and territories and our international partners in order

to recognize this document within the context of the Constitution and our legal framework.

In keeping with our strong tradition of taking concrete action in support of indigenous peoples, we remain committed to endorsing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in a timely manner. It will be a moment of pride for all Canadians.

● (2020)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, there still is not an answer to my question that I raised originally about what the formal date is for Canada to adopt the UN charter or the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In the letter to the Prime Minister on June 9, one of the issues that is raised by the various signatories, including the First Nations Summit and the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, is the fact that the federal government has been seeking support for endorsement of its strategy from provincial and territorial governments but no consultations with indigenous peoples have been carried out. Such actions unjustly treat indigenous people as adversaries and fail to uphold the honour of the crown.

Despite what the government says about moving forward, the first nations in this country are saying that they are not being included. When will they be included and when will Canada sign on?

Mr. John Duncan: Madam Speaker, because something is said does not make it true. Our country has a strong record of supporting and advancing aboriginal rights at home and abroad and we take these commitments very seriously.

Our government supports the principles behind the declaration and believes it should be endorsed as an aspirational document. We have promised to endorse the declaration and will do so. We are committed to a process of reconciliation in our relationship with aboriginal people in Canada, and I think we saw that very clearly. Once again, it was demonstrated this week in Winnipeg.

This government continues to demonstrate leadership by advancing the cause of indigenous rights around the world and creating opportunities for a better future for aboriginal peoples in Canada.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until Monday, September 20, 2010, at 11 a.m. pursuant to order made earlier today and Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 8:22 p.m.)

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