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Monday, October 31, 2005

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

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

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 31, 2005

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ) moved that Bill C-407, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (right to die with dignity), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I have come to the conclusion that the Parliament of Canada and its members cannot pussyfoot around any longer and expect the courts or government to make the necessary changes to the Criminal Code to recognize the right to die with dignity for the people of Quebec and Canada.

Any lucid person facing a very difficult and painful end of life, which they consider degrading, an unfitting end to the life they have led, inconsistent with their condition as a free person, has to be able to decide how they wish to die, including if they want to be aided in that objective. This does not mean that all lives do not deserve to be lived; quite the contrary.

The experience of doctors who look after individuals who have been allowed to be helped to die in countries that have passed legislation in this regard is enlightening. One might infer that, knowing that they will be able to get help to die with dignity when they reach the point where their life has definitely become unbearable, it will be easier for people to live fully a painful end of life or a life of extreme limitations because they feel imprisoned in their bodies. As Félix Leclerc reminded us, death is full of life.

This is a societal debate. A few years ago, some countries legislated on euthanasia and assisted suicide. From the outset, I want to emphasize that, in Canada, we have definitions of euthanasia provided in the report from the Senate of Canada which differ from the definition in Europe. In Canada, it is understood that euthanasia, which is the act of putting an end to the suffering of a person, may be either voluntary, that is at the person's request; non-voluntary, if it is not known whether the person wishes to die or not; or involuntary, which would mean against the person's will. Should we not agree immediately that a person's life ought to be interrupted at that

person's request, under specific conditions and with safeguards in place?

So, the Netherlands, Oregon in the United States and Belgium have similar legislation. Switzerland, like Canada, does not consider suicide a crime. Assisted suicide, which carries a 14-year prison sentence in Canada, is an offence in Switzerland only if it is done for corrupt or selfish reasons. Death must unequivocally be the result of suicide. That is where, in 2004, Manon Brunelle, former assistant producer with Télé-Québec, obtained assistance ending her life from a volunteer organization called EXIT. She wanted to televise her death in order to promote the right to die with dignity and with help, under certain conditions.

More recently, in July 2005 in Quebec, there was the tragic case of Marielle Houle, in the late stages of a degenerative disease. Her loving husband, André Bergeron, had to leave his job to take care of her full time. He finally gave in to Marielle's repeated requests to die, but the circumstances were tragic. Now, he is out on bail, waiting to see what charges he will face. Her death illustrates the distress felt by many helpers, without financial resources, sufficient knowledge or any firm support to which they are entitled from the public system. The slippery slope must be considered from this angle too.

The Denys Arcand film *The Barbarian Invasions* brilliantly portrayed one reality when there is a desire to die with dignity: having money and knowing the right people can make up for the lack of legislation for everyone. Former Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dubé wrote, "Let's stop being hypocrites. Hospitals are practising euthanasia. They call it a protocol". The lucky ones have always had a friend who was a doctor or a nurse who knew how to secretly get hold of what they needed when they could not stand it any longer.

In Canada, above all, it was the extraordinary fight by Sue Rodriguez, from British Columbia, to amend the Criminal Code that brought the debate on assisted suicide to the forefront.

• (1105)

She had Lou Gehrig's disease and in 1992 she sought permission from the Supreme Court for doctor assisted suicide, since she was physically unable to take her own life.

In 1993, five justices to four ruled against Sue Rodriguez's request. I will read an excerpt from Justice Peter Cory's dissenting opinion:

The life of an individual must include dying. Dying is the final act in the drama of life. If death is an integral part of life, which I believe it to be, then death should be protected as a right under section 7 of the Constitution. The right to die with dignity should be as well protected as is any other aspect of the right to life.

Private Members' Business

Since Sue Rodriguez's request was denied—five to four—by the Supreme Court in 1993, and despite the hope raised by the statements made by then Minister of Justice, Alan Rock, during consideration of the motion put forward by the hon. member Svend Robinson, which was rejected by the House of Commons, the federal government has done nothing.

Now, it is up to Parliament and the hon. members to act, since there are far too many people at death's door who are suffering and do not deserve to nor want to. This is not a religious issue. The religious convictions of some must not become law for others. We are here to create laws for the common good and out of respect for rights.

Some people's response might be “Yes, but there must be universally accessible palliative care”. I agree, but palliative care and the right to die with dignity are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Moreover, the end-of-life palliative care policy adopted by the Government of Quebec in 2004 states in its introduction that the failure of palliative therapies constitutes one of the most difficult end-of-life problems. Even with a quality palliative approach, medication and other therapies may not have the desired effect on the patient, on his or her physical and mental suffering. This is along the same lines as what is on the web concerning the Netherlands' legislation. It states that there are, unfortunately, cases where care, no matter how good, does not stop certain terminally ill patients who are experiencing unbearable suffering from demanding that their physician put an end to their lives. In such cases, interrupting the patient's life through euthanasia at his or her request may be the appropriate conclusion to palliative care.

Moreover, the introduction to the Quebec policy also refers to the fact that certain physicians may make use of what is called continuous sedation, which consists of a comatose state artificially induced by drugs. If prolonged until death ensues, continuous sedation poses ethical problems, particularly because there is a risk of its being confused with euthanasia although not labelled as such. The fact that there are no guidelines for this practice is a cause of concern for a number of those involved in palliative care.

In 2003, a Quebec medical journal, *L'Actualité médicale*, contained an article on “Euthanasia: conspiracy of silence”. Some of the physicians interviewed said they would never want to die the way some of their patients had. That is what some said, but others, like Dr. Pierre Marois, spoke of hypocrisy and the conspiracy of silence, because euthanasia on demand is being practised in Quebec. He described it as an open secret, and felt objective studies were urgently needed in order to cast light on the clandestine practice.

I know that my bill is being faulted for having no safeguards. It is an exception to the Criminal Code. If the conditions contained in the bill are not met, then the code continues to apply.

I have a question. I wish the Minister of Justice were here. How is it that in both Quebec and Canada—they will tell you so in English Canada—there is evidence that euthanasia is being practised?

• (1110)

How can it go on without rules? How many cases of euthanasia are there in Canada of the first, second or third kind? Nobody knows. Studies should at least be done. My bill is being criticized for not

providing for any, but it simply provides for an exception to the Criminal Code.

There is strong support in Quebec and Canada for euthanasia, the right to die with dignity and assisted suicide. Saturday's *La Presse* cited 71% support for euthanasia.

Since 1993, the last time the Supreme Court rejected this matter, countries such as the Netherlands and Belgium have established legislation. They paralleled legislation that I drew on heavily in my bill. These two countries have experience. The Netherlands has more than does Belgium, because, since 1995, medical guidelines have allowed physicians wishing to assist patients who are terminally ill or suffering from a degenerative disease without risk of legal action.

These guidelines have therefore led to broad experience, and the Netherlands established a law in 2001 drawing on the medical guidelines and requiring physicians to ensure that an individual was indeed free and informed and wishing to die. In addition, as they said in their legislation, the patient must “experience severe physical or mental pain without prospect of relief, but need not be in a terminal phase. All other possible solutions have been exhausted or the patient must have refused all other possible solutions. Euthanasia shall be performed by a qualified medical practitioner. The medical practitioner shall consult at least one other medical practitioner and shall inform the local coroner that euthanasia has been administered”.

Those who have read my bill know that these are precisely the guidelines that I am proposing.

In Oregon, they took another route. It should be noted that this is an American state where citizens voted twice on such legislation. Their act allows any adult suffering from a terminal illness who is a resident of that state and whose diagnosed life expectancy is less than six months to obtain a prescription for drugs to end his or her life. Under my bill, a medical practitioner would be authorized to write such a prescription, under certain conditions. The patient would have to make two oral and one written request for such drugs. Moreover, the patient would have to get the opinion of a second medical practitioner, and the two requests would have to be made at least 15 days apart.

The legislation in Belgium is largely patterned on that of the Netherlands. As for Switzerland, theirs is an interesting approach. Switzerland, like Canada, has decriminalized suicide. However, Canada has decided that aiding a person to commit suicide would carry a sentence of 14 years in prison. By contrast, in Switzerland, unless this is done for venal motives, a person—we are primarily talking about a group called EXIT—can help someone die. It must be clearly established that the decision to die is that of the dying person.

I met a young woman who told me, and this was very touching, that her husband, who was Swiss, had decided to stay in Switzerland when he found out that he had terminal lung cancer. He wanted to make the decision, as a free man, as to when he would die—surrounded by his family. That woman told me he died happy, even though death is not a pleasant thing.

Private Members' Business

I did not address my bill per se. Members have read it. The principles it puts forward are the ones I covered in my remarks. Obviously, I would like this Parliament to debate it. With all that happened in 1992 and 1993 concerning Sue Rodriguez and with the Senate report, we cannot remain insensitive to the cries of pain and desire for dignity of so many people who are facing death. We could be cowardly, knowing that these people are not likely to stage demonstrations with signs.

In closing, I will read this testimony from the daughter of a friend who died from cancer after suffering great pain and who had agreed to help me prepare and promote this bill.

● (1115)

As it turned out, her dearest wish—to die with members of her family holding her hands—could not be fulfilled. Had the bill drafted and put forward by Ms. Lalonde been passed, our mother would certainly have taken advantage of it when her life was no longer worthy of the name. Perhaps her life would have ended a few hours sooner, but this legislation would have been well worth it, to ensure that her wish was fulfilled and that she could have died peacefully near her loved ones when her life was no longer meaningful.

Who could object to a person being allowed to decide how they will leave their body, to put an end once and for all to relentless pain they are unfairly made to suffer? Having witnessed this unfortunate one-sided fight, I can assure hon. members that she paid too high a price for relief from her suffering. While people may be afraid to suffer and die, they are even more afraid of dying alone and without dignity.

● (1120)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): I would remind hon. members that we cannot refer to the absence from the House of another member.

The hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi has the floor for a question or comment.

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday I was in my riding office when I received a call from a lady in the hospital who wanted to see me. She said she was no longer able to get around, so I went to her hospital room and spent some 30 minutes with her. This lady is 50 years old and has multiple sclerosis. She can no longer use her limbs, is immobilized, and in great pain. She told me she has to use ice when she goes to bed at night to reduce the pain her body is in. She has been in this state in hospital for over a year. Her mind is perfectly clear, she is a most intelligent woman with whom I had an extraordinary conversation. She is on morphine and the dose is increased from time to time, enough to keep her alive but perhaps not enough to fully do away with her suffering. She says she is still in pain. I saw her in her wheelchair beside the bed, virtually unable to move any more.

I told her we were soon going to be discussing euthanasia in the House. I asked her how we politicians could differentiate between cases where life is truly unbearable, with no hope of cure, and other cases. I would not want to see it apply to a widow of 75 who no longer wants to live because her husband died two years before. That is not its purpose. So I asked her how we would differentiate and she said perhaps to have two criteria: a degenerative disease with no possibility of remission, and unbearable suffering. She said that these both applied to her and she had really no hope left in her life.

This is what I wonder, and what I would ask the hon. member. Are the criteria she proposes sufficient to properly delineate this so that there is no danger of its becoming too broad at some point?

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member very much for this example illustrating my bill. He is asking, and rightly so, about safeguards. As a matter of fact, in every country that has adopted a similar policy, those opposed feared that there would not be sufficient safeguards or that this was the start of a slippery slope.

I have already said that my bill seeks neither to decriminalize nor legalize; it is an exemption to the Criminal Code. Some people might say that it is too strict. That is why I am turning this question back to the member. Why have no studies been conducted in Canada to determine how many assisted suicides have taken place under the definitions set out in the 1995 Senate report?

I have spoken to numerous experts who also do not understand the absence of studies. I am completely in favour of this. Will we include, in an amendment to the Criminal Code, the need for such studies? In my opinion, such studies are essential to every provincial health care system.

We are lagging behind. Debates must be held, particularly with medical practitioners. Not all of them will agree to end someone's life or agree to this person's request for help. This is normal. We must ensure they have this freedom. However, the conditions set out in the bill are part of existing legislation. They must be observed and verified by doctors.

In my bill, I indicated that it had to be a medical practitioner or a person assisted by a medical practitioner. Why did I say that? It is very simple: there is a doctor shortage. Having to find a doctor might mean that someone would suffer a painful death because one could not be found in time.

However, when I talk about someone assisted by a medical practitioner, I am proposing that patients be surrounded by a medical team and for their wishes to be respected. Patients may obtain permission for assistance. That way, they know that, if their condition becomes unbearable, they will have assistance. Maybe they will not need it, but at least they can put their minds at rest: they can die peacefully. That is what—

● (1125)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-407, which was introduced in this House on June 15 by the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

[*English*]

Bill C-407 raises some very important issues about death and dignity. For many, the proposals in this bill may appear at first blush to be worthy of support. However, it is important to have a solid understanding of what the bill would do, if enacted, in order to decide whether debate on this bill should continue.

Private Members' Business

Having examined the bill, I am confident in stating my position that Bill C-407 should not be supported. The bill is quite broad in scope. It seeks to create an exception not only to the assisted suicide offence, but also to the offence of murder. As such, Bill C-407 would permit some forms of euthanasia as well as assisted suicide.

It is important to note that the person who aids another person to die does not have to be a doctor. The bill provides that the aider, or the person who assists, must be assisted by a doctor, and it does not state whether the doctor's assistance would be at the time of death.

The bill would not only apply to terminally ill patients, but also to persons who suffer from severe physical or mental pain without any prospect of relief. Theoretically, persons who suffer from depression could request assistance in dying and those who aid them would not be found criminally liable if the conditions of the bill were respected.

Bill C-407 has the potential to permit quite a vast array of situations. However, let us look at the safeguards that are in the bill. The most glaring shortcomings of Bill C-407 which raise considerable concern with respect to protecting physically or mentally vulnerable persons is the marked departure from the existing medical and legal standard for providing a free and informed consent.

The wording in Bill C-407 of "while appearing to be lucid" would introduce into the law what could be characterized as a vague, broad and arbitrary term to justify actions to terminate someone's life. Also, Bill C-407 contains little reporting requirements with only an obligation on the aider, or the person who assists, to provide the coroner with a copy of the diagnosis.

The legal regimes in other jurisdictions that have permissive laws in this area, such as the state of Oregon, the Netherlands and Belgium have extensive reporting provisions in their statutes. These not only provide an oversight mechanism but also enable the collection of valuable data to track the activities and to evaluate the application of this legal regime that is in place.

Another area that is of concern is the amount of consultation that should go into the proposal of a bill of this nature. A key concern with respect to Bill C-407 is that it appears to have been developed without prior consultations with many of the groups that would have a direct interest in the issue. Persons with disabilities and organizations representing them would certainly wish to express their views and concerns as many of them have perceived that the bill touches their circumstances more directly.

The bill would also impact on the medical profession, doctors, nurses, or others who provide medical services. Surely they would wish to be consulted well in advance of specific proposals being brought before Parliament. The manner in which coroners investigate and classify whether a death is natural, suicidal, accidental, homicidal, or undetermined would also be impacted by Bill C-407. These are just a few of the key groups that would be directly impacted.

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

Average Canadians should be invited to share their points of view and their concerns on these issues, because these are moral issues and therefore very personal.

[*English*]

Some may suggest that the issue has already been studied extensively, particularly by the Senate Special Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide in the mid-1990s and that now is the time to move forward on the issue.

Although some Canadians would favour a change in this area of the law, what remains unknown and is critical to this debate is whether their opinions are based on a good level of awareness of the issues, the law and the ramifications. Again, even if there is an appetite for change, we need to know what Canadians would consider being appropriate in terms of a legal regime before moving ahead with specific proposals as we have here.

In this regard, Bill C-407 is, I suggest, being introduced prematurely. It is also quite realistically too broad in scope as I described earlier.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first let me make clear that I rise to address Bill C-407 on my own behalf as a representative of my constituents and not of my party. The Conservative Party will hold a completely free vote on this bill, as it does on all other matters of moral contention. We believe that members of Parliament should vote in a manner consistent with their consciences and/or the views of their constituents on matters such as this.

Bill C-407 seeks to amend the Criminal Code to permit active euthanasia, that is to say, the deliberate and lawful taking of innocent human life. I will start by addressing what I regard as the profound philosophical error at the heart of this bill and will then summarize some of the dangerous unintended consequences which would result from its adoption.

In a word, this legalization of euthanasia would change our social understanding of the human person as a subject with infinite and inherent value into a disposable object which can be eliminated at will. This bill is premised on a radical misunderstanding of the dignity of the human person. It is, in effect, an attack on the inalienable dignity of the human person, which is the foundational premise of liberal democracy and, indeed, of any culture which merits to be considered a civilization.

Properly conceived, human dignity is not a subjective sense of one's self worth, nor is it a reflection of one's worth in the eyes of society or the state. Dignity is not an ephemeral quality which ebbs or flows based on one's mood or social consensus or anyone's will. Rather, any coherent understanding of human rights, including the right to self-government, which is the predicate of democracy, is grounded in the inviolable dignity of the human person.

In other words, human dignity, which is the basis of our civilizational belief in the sanctity of human life, is ontological, that is to say, an essential and inseparable characteristic of human personhood, of human existence. To legalize or seek to legitimize the deliberate taking of innocent human life as this bill seeks to do is to commit the gravest offence possible against the human person. In short, it would turn a society such as ours, grounded as it is in this objective existential understanding of human dignity, on its head.

Obviously this truth of the human person is most clearly understood in theistic terms, that is to say that the human person is created in the image and likeness of God, an understanding most notably and beautifully summarized in the preamble of the foundational document of liberal democracy, the Declaration of Independence, which states, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights”, among which is the right to life.

However, this is by no means a sectarian doctrine limited to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Rather, it is a truth universally understood throughout history by just societies, including our own. Let me cite some of the wide-ranging expressions of this truth that man cannot surrender his own life, nor can one take the life of another innocent human person.

From the 5th century BC until now, western physicians have sworn in the Hippocratic Oath, first, to do no harm and that:

I will not give a drug that is deadly to anyone if asked [for it], nor will I suggest the way—

Thomas Jefferson, one of the fathers of liberal democracy stated presciently:

The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only [legitimate] object of good government.

The 1948 Declaration of Geneva of the World Medical Association states, “I will maintain the utmost respect for human life from its beginning”.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone's right to life shall be protected by law and no one shall be deprived of his life intentionally.

The Supreme Court of Canada, in its 1992 decision in the Rodriguez case, stated, “Suicide remains an act which is fundamentally contrary to human nature”.

The Select Committee on Medical Ethics of the House of Lords concluded after an exhaustive study of euthanasia that society's prohibition against intentional killing is the cornerstone of law and social relationships, that it protects each one of us equally.

• (1135)

The United States Supreme Court concluded in a case similar to the Rodriguez case “We are confronted with a consistent and almost universal tradition that has long rejected the asserted right, and continues explicitly to reject it today, even for terminally ill, mentally capable adults”.

In our own Parliament the Special Senate Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide concluded in 1995, “In a pluralistic society, respect for life is a societal value that transcends individual, religious or diverse cultural values”.

Private Members' Business

We can see the consequences of rejecting this universal understanding of the sanctity of human life in modern history. I am reminded of the words used by Dostoyevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov* where one of his characters says that without God, anything becomes possible. To paraphrase that, without the sanctity of human life as an inviolable social principle, anything is possible.

That was nowhere more evident than in Nazi Germany in the earlier part of the last century. In the 1930s beginning on the grounds of compassionate treatment of the mentally ill and the severely infirm, euthanasia was unleashed in that country. Passive euthanasia became active euthanasia and active euthanasia became an entire cult of eugenics. We know what kind of horror and human tragedy that resulted in.

We can see the same slippery slope at work in Holland today. Three separate studies have concluded that an estimated 1,000 cases of active euthanasia occur a year without the consent of the patient. According to one study, Dutch doctors have gone from killing the terminally ill who asked for it, to killing the chronically ill who asked for it, to killing the depressed who had no physical illness but who asked for it, to killing newborn babies because they have birth defects even though by definition they cannot ask for it. The slippery slope is a reality in Holland today.

I would like to quote from a very thoughtful study that was conducted by a special committee in the state of New York regarding euthanasia. It spent several years examining the issue and concluded that the state of New York should not legitimize or legalize euthanasia. That study concluded the following:

Undiagnosed or untreated mental illness. Many individuals who contemplate suicide—including those who are terminally ill—suffer from treatable mental disorders, most commonly depression...If assisted suicide is legalized, many requests based on mental illness are likely to be granted, even though they do not reflect a competent, settled decision to die.

Requests for assisted suicide are also highly correlated with unrelieved pain and other discomfort associated with physical illness. Despite significant advances in palliative care, the pain and discomfort that accompany many physical illnesses are often grossly undertreated in current clinical practice. If assisted suicide is legalized, physicians are likely to grant requests for assisted suicide from patients in pain before all available options to relieve the patient's pain have thoroughly been explored.

The study further said:

If physician-assisted suicide is legalized, many individuals are likely to seek the option because their suffering and fears have not been adequately addressed.

The practices will pose the greatest risks to those who are poor, elderly, isolated, members of a minority group, or who lack access to good medical care.

This will result in the devaluation of the lives of the disabled. This is one reason that most Canadian disability groups are strongly opposed to this legislation.

I believe that compassion properly understood means literally in the root of the word “to suffer with”. To kill is not compassionate. I invite all members of the House to seriously consider the Rubicon that the sponsor of this bill invites us to cross. Once one crosses that Rubicon, one cannot cross back. If we say in our society that innocent human life does not have absolute value, then we will embark on a social experiment the consequences of which I am frightened to contemplate.

Private Members' Business

●(1140)

Let us take a stand for true compassion. Let us give the resources necessary to provide proper palliative care to those suffering terminal illnesses. Let us not say that killing constitutes compassion. Let us stand true to the value of compassion which defines our country.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the previous member for the Conservative Party did, I rise to speak to this bill as an individual member of the House. The NDP caucus has differing opinions on how to respond to Bill C-407.

My position is to oppose the bill. There is a need for debate on the issue of dying with dignity. The problem is the bill focuses the debate on only one area, an area that should be put off and discussed only as part of the larger debate when conclusions are reached on the issue of assisted suicide and only when that debate takes place and proper services are in place to deal with those people in our society who are unfortunate enough to be faced, at times, with the decision whether to end their lives on their own at a much earlier stage than they might otherwise have to.

The debate has been around assisted suicide. It has been highlighted by the Rodriguez case back in the early 1990s. However, it has been isolated to that area.

I think Windsor has the best hospice in the country. I talked with the director, the volunteers and the medical personnel. With very few exceptions, that entire community has been providing palliative care broadly based across the whole of the city and the county. They have told me that we can build a system that will dramatically reduce anyone having to make this decision. Our medical doctor, who is one of the leading pain control specialists in the country, has said that there are very few cases where medication cannot be used to control pain so it is tolerable and people do not have to make the choice of ending their life prematurely because they cannot end what might be otherwise intolerable pain.

So much of this is very personal to us, although we ultimately as legislators have to think in terms of what our responsibility is to set national policy. I think of a friend of mine. He was our law dean at law school and the president of the university. He ultimately died of Lou Gehrig's disease. I would like to be able to take some credit, although I was not directly involved, but his friends and family, his wife in particular, built a system around him. He struggled but he was determined to live absolutely as long as possible, and he did.

I am worried when I look at the bill. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member from La Pointe-de-l'Île, this is not only assisted suicide. As we heard from the parliamentary secretary, in some cases this moves over into euthanasia. Speaking as a lawyer, there is no doubt about that in my mind.

What we really need to do is build that system. About a month ago there was a conference in Gatineau. Caregivers in the system said that we had not built that. The government has some responsibility in this regard.

When we look at some of the provision in the Romanow report, it is quite clear that if we had expanded at a more rapid rate our home care system, our hospices, our palliative care, we would have dramatically reduced the need at any time for someone to have to make this decision.

Again I am going to be critical of the government. It was the NDP member from Sackville, Nova Scotia, who pushed for allowing people to take time away from work to care for loved ones. Rather than following his program, the government put very extremely restrictions on it. In fact, the government budgeted huge amounts of money and spent about 10% of it because it was so restricted that so few people could take advantage of it.

However, if the system were a good one, if it were well funded and did not have these restrictions, it would be part of the system that would prevent people from having to make of taking their own lives prematurely.

●(1145)

The member for La Pointe-de-l'Île spoke about the Netherlands and Oregon. I am worried about what has gone on in Oregon, to this extent. At the same time it brought legislation in, Oregon was prioritizing what benefits people could get. So much of what I think has gone on in Oregon is about minimizing the demands that ill people will put on its system. Canada is not about that.

We built the medicare system. We built our health care system on the basis that every Canadian would have access to it, including those who had terminal illnesses. We have failed them up to this point. I am quite convinced, again from my experience in my own community, that we could build a system that would allow every Canadian to die with dignity in their own time, in the natural course of events.

I am worried about the Netherlands. Two or three weeks ago, it introduced new amendments to its legislation that would allow custodians and guardians of children to make decisions. That again is not assisted suicide. That is not even euthanasia. That country has now moved, if it goes ahead with that legislation, to mercy killings. It gets into the Latimer situation that we and our courts faced. We found that we would not go to go down this road.

The ability of Canada to deal with this is quite clear. We have to assess and build a system that will recognize this. We will never allow for mercy killings. We will not allow for euthanasia. If we build that appropriate health care system, we might have those extreme, rare cases where we would allow for assisted suicide, but we are nowhere near that at this point. I leave myself open to be convinced that we have to do this at some point in the future, once that system is fully in place,

The risk we have is sending a message to the country that life is expendable, that we are prepared to say that we do not care enough for people to take care of them. Canada is not about that. Our health care system is not about that. We should never go down that route. That is what we risk if we adopt this bill.

I hear particularly from the Bloc that we should support the bill, that we need the debate and that we should send it to committee at second reading. On a personal level, I cannot do that and I do not believe members of the House should do that. By doing so, we accept in principle that we will allow for both assisted suicide and euthanasia. I am not prepared to cross that line and say to the country that we will start down that road.

Private Members' Business

I have a little story from Janet Napper, the executive director of the Hospice Association of Ontario. She describes going to a hospice shortly after she started working and talking to an elderly man. He specifically approached her to say that when he came to the hospice, he knew he was dying but he also knew that he would be treated as though he was not dying that he would be treated with respect. That gave him the courage to continue on.

That is the kind of system we have to have in Canada, not this bill.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today's debate on the bill introduced by my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île is on an issue that calls for reflection and questions our consciences on moral, religious and ethical levels. Do we have the right to die with dignity? This debate is serious and important. We must approach it calmly and stay true to our convictions, but we must also look at what this debate is really about.

The main purpose of this bill is to define and set the parameters for a person to die with dignity. The bill sets out conditions to allow any person to aid a person close to death or suffering from a debilitating illness, to die with dignity. I want to stress to die "with dignity". This phrase is extremely important and makes all the difference in what it is we are debating. I will read the summary of the bill:

—to allow any person, under certain conditions, to aid a person close to death or suffering from a debilitating illness to die with dignity if the person has expressed the free and informed wish to die.

These words are extremely important. When one does not look at the wording of the bill, it is possible to wander mistakenly down all sorts of byways and contexts to know where the debate is going. It is very important that this nuance be clarified. Many people believe that this bill gives a blank cheque to decide on someone's life or death, at any time and under any circumstances. This is not the aim of the debate on this bill, quite the opposite.

First and foremost, the bill is aimed at lucid people who face a painful end to life, who are suffering and who have no hope of ever being able to improve their physical condition. This bill would give such people, who cannot hope for improvement, the freedom to decide under what conditions they too will have a quality death. This experience will take place in circumstances where they are accompanied by medical practitioners. The physicians will have a role to play.

My colleague has drawn her inspiration from other jurisdictions. Some countries have already adopted legislation on euthanasia and assisted suicide. In Canada, we know that assisting a suicide carries the penalty of 14 years in prison, in contrast to Switzerland where it is deemed punishable only if it is done for venal or selfish reasons.

I would like to recall the life of Manon Brunelle, who suffers from multiple sclerosis. At age 36, her condition has deteriorated rapidly to the point where she can no longer receive treatment without pain. Her story touched me deeply. I have a daughter who has suffered from this disease since she was 24. Over the past 10 years, her health has not yet deteriorated to that point, but her quality of life is not that of a young girl of her age.

Although there are grounds for hope that the her illness will remain stable, there is no question that this debate has a quite different meaning for me, especially when my own daughter asks me not to leave her alone to her fate if one day she were no longer able to live life fully and there was no medication that could change her fate. I hope that I will never have to take this terrible, wrenching decision. I can understand the terrible anguish that family members experience when they are asked this over and over again, like a long cry of agony.

There are other cases that deserve mention in order to fully understand the issue of the right to die with dignity. There is, for example, the case of Marielle Houle, who was surrounded by her family and whose husband was praised by her family for the attention and the care he gave her. This man is free on parole waiting to find out what charge will be brought against him for having helped his wife to die. He did so, to be sure, under awful circumstances, but things could have been quite different in a legal context. The situation would have been quite different and a great deal of suffering could have been avoided. It is our duty to take part in this debate which is before us today.

• (1155)

It is easy to imagine how distressed people like André Bergeron can be when a member of their family or a spouse keeps asking for an end to be put to their daily suffering. These are conscious people for whom life has lost its meaning because their body no longer responds. For far too long, their body has been a prison.

It takes a lot of love to understand this terrible request. The curtain fell long ago for these people whose life is nothing but physical and mental suffering from terminal or degenerative illness, for which there is no prospect of relief and quality of life.

Sue Rodriguez, the Canadian woman who had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, fought before her death in the spring of 1994 for a limited amendment to the Criminal Code so that adults freely and repeatedly requesting it could be helped to die with dignity.

A motion on this important issue was put to the House of Commons by a former NDP colleague, Svend Robinson. The motion was rejected by the members. Sue Rodriguez's application was also rejected by the Supreme Court in 1993, by five judges to four. Today, ten years later, the fight must continue to make known the wishes of suffering and lucid people, such as Sue Rodriguez, Manon, Murielle Houle and so many others so their fight may not be in vain.

It is clear today that the responsibility rests with the members of Parliament. Public discussion and debate is needed to express this issue clearly. Discussion must include not only the distress of the persons who are suffering and their fight but the overpowering impotence faced by those who care for their loved ones, for whom life has no more meaning because their bodies have failed them and because they obtain no relief from medication or other palliative care.

Today, we might think that, because science has made progress and helps prolong life and because quality palliative care is available, there is no need to amend the Criminal Code to permit death with dignity.

Government Orders

This is far from the case according to the authors of the April 2004 end-of-life palliative care policy issued by Quebec's health and social services. Page 7 of this document states that the failure of palliative care is one of the most difficult problems experienced at this final stage. Despite the quality approach, care, medication and various treatments, for some people, these drugs prove ineffective. We are talking about some people.

This is not intended for everyone. Those who wish to continue to receive palliative care may do so. I am talking about testimony from individuals who say that they are lucid and clear-minded, and who no longer have the will to live because they are suffering greatly.

Some terminally ill patients suffer unbearably and ask their doctor to end their life. Ending one's life may be, for those who ask, an appropriate end to quality palliative care.

We may question the practices of some doctors who resort to continuous sedation of their patients, using drugs to send them into an artificial coma, sometimes until the patient dies.

I thought long and hard when my colleague asked me to support her bill. Obviously, I have a profound stake in this issue, perhaps because of my daughter's condition. However, this summer I also read Frédéric Veille's book entitled *Je vous demande le droit de mourir*, and I recommend it to everyone. This book is an heartrending account of the daily life of a young quadriplegic from France, who was the victim of a senseless car accident. I also invite members to watch the film entitled *La Mer Intérieure*, about Ramon and his long fight to die with dignity.

I ask all parliamentarians to discuss this important issue with their constituents—

• (1200)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but we are resuming debate. The hon. member for Halton.

[English]

Mr. Gary Carr (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that I have only a couple of minutes to speak, but I will fully utilize the time. I will be voting against this piece of legislation.

Like many members of the House, I believe, I have received a lot of mail, emails and phone calls on this issue. The next time I speak to the bill I hope to go through some of that information.

I have also set up citizens advisory committees in a couple of areas, on seniors and on health care. We had a meeting of the citizens advisory committees about two Saturdays ago. I want to thank everybody who came out to that meeting. Some people were in favour of this bill, but the vast majority was opposed.

There were people there like Joanne Matters from Halton Pro Life, who said, as was recorded in the *Milton Canadian Champion*, "there is no such thing as an assisted suicide bill with safeguards. It is always about killing another human". She went on to say that we "can't legalize a little bit of killing for those who ask to be killed. Eventually it will include those who don't ask. History speaks for itself".

I also received information from many people right across my riding. I received a nice letter from the Reverend Charlie Jordan, a pastor at Mary Mother of God Parish in Oakville. He sent a letter saying that he is totally opposed to the changes proposed in the bill. He goes on to say that human life is too important to permit such a course of action. Instead, he says, we should be providing every help we can to prevent pain.

I also have received numerous letters on this issue from the Knights of Columbus, as I am sure all members have. Thomas Pepper sent one. Most of the letters were very similar. The feeling is that it is wrong to take someone's life and that such a change in law would be open to abuse. In an age when we hear a lot about elder abuse, this would not be an acceptable path to take.

I will continue my remarks next time, but I did want to get it on the record that I will be voting against the bill. I hope to elaborate on my reasons at the next opportunity.

• (1205)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PACIFIC GATEWAY ACT

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.) moved that Bill C-68, An Act to support development of Canada's Pacific Gateway, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to stand in the House today to begin debate on Bill C-68, an act to support the development of Canada's Pacific gateway.

This legislation reflects the commitment of this government, working in partnership with its provincial counterparts and industry stakeholders, to best position Canada so it can prosper in a 21st century economy, an economy that is changing rapidly.

International in its outlook but domestic at its core, the Pacific gateway reaches beyond British Columbia. It is a pan-western initiative with benefits for all Canadians.

The legislation that this government has introduced articulates just how this vision will be put into action. It does this in two ways.

First, the bill sets out new policy frameworks for further development of Canada's Pacific gateway and commits the federal government to a clearly defined strategy.

Second, it establishes a new governance foundation through the creation of Canada's Pacific gateway council, to build consensus among a wide range of public and private stakeholders and to advise decision makers on priorities for developing the Pacific gateway.

Government Orders

I will speak to both aspects of the legislation, but I think it is equally important to provide the context for the introduction of this legislation.

As the most trade dependent nation among G-7 countries, Canada depends on international commerce for its prosperity. Today, the dynamics of global trade are driven by rapid, seamless and secure movements of goods and people around the world through global supply chains.

Much of the activity surrounding supply chains and changing trade patterns is concentrated in key geographic locations or gateways. These gateways are linked to each other and to major markets by corridors. The efficient functioning of trade related gateways and corridors is central to the prosperity of trading nations like Canada.

The rise of emerging markets such as India and China makes it a national priority to ensure that we maximize the effectiveness of our Pacific gateway and ensure that we are taking maximum advantage of it. That requires a new integrated approach to a wide range of interconnected issues, including, but going well beyond, transportation infrastructure.

This is the challenge and the national priority that the Government of Canada is addressing through Canada's Pacific gateway strategy.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

The emergence of China as a global trading partner is realigning patterns of trade and investment internationally, shifting global supply chains and framing the pursuit of competitiveness and prosperity around the globe.

China is currently Canada's fourth largest export market. According to International Trade Canada, our exports to China grew by 90%, from \$3.5 billion to \$6.7 billion, between 1995 and 2004. During the same period, Canada's imports from China grew by more than 400%, from \$4.6 billion to \$24.1 billion. And China's recent dramatic growth is expected to continue. While it is currently the world's seventh largest economy, it is predicted to be the second largest by 2020, and the largest by 2041.

While Canada-China trade is likely to remain modest compared to the overall value of Canada's trade with the United States trade for some time to come, our strategic interests clearly require new efforts to position Canada strongly in the Asia-Pacific context.

The rapid rise of China as a trading power directs particular attention to both the challenges and opportunities associated with Canada's Pacific orientation. Indeed, Canada is uniquely positioned to take advantage of emerging opportunities in China and other Asia-Pacific countries, including India and Korea. The Pacific gateway also benefits considerably from a population base that enjoys strong cultural connections with the economies of the Asia-Pacific region, through its heritage, family ties, businesses and investments.

The proximity of Canada's west coast ports to Asian markets offers a one to two day sailing time advantage over all others in the western hemisphere. Canadian rail operators offer among the most affordable freight rates in North America, and our trucking sector is

also highly competitive and efficient, both in Canada and in transborder markets.

In addition to the B.C. Lower Mainland ports, significant volumes of container traffic through the new terminal being developed by the Port of Prince Rupert will add considerably to the Pacific gateway picture. Clearly, a strong foundation exists on which to further develop Canada's Pacific gateway as the crossroads between North America and Asia.

[*English*]

I would like to turn now to the gateway itself. Canada's Pacific gateway is a multimodal network of transportation infrastructure focused on trade. It is comprised of interconnected public and privately owned assets including ports, railways and road systems.

Changing trade patterns associated with emerging markets are expected to result in significant growth in trade through this gateway. By 2020 container cargo coming through the ports in British Columbia is projected by the B.C. government to increase by up to 300%, from 1.8 million containers to between 5 and 7 million containers. The value of the trade is projected to reach \$75 billion by 2020, up from the current \$35 billion.

This will contribute \$10.5 billion annually to the Canadian economy, including \$3.5 billion in B.C. The trade increases are projected to result in a 178% growth in direct jobs by 2020, from 18,000 to more than 50,000. As we can see, we are talking about trade, more business and more jobs for Canadians.

If we are going to move ahead, we have to understand some of the challenges we face. Despite our potential, Canada's advantages are being jeopardized by freight congestion in the B.C. lower mainland and by points farther east, and concerns exist about capacity to handle projected trade growth. At the same time, Canada is facing an aggressive competition in attracting and retaining a portion of the growing Asian trade.

Other countries and regions are investing in infrastructure and related initiatives to position themselves to seize trade opportunities. For example, the U.S. government recently approved the \$286.5 billion over five years safe, accountable, flexible and efficient transportation equity act: a legacy for users. It includes significant investment in the transportation system to improve trade flow.

Government Orders

Recent trade flow increases have strained existing transportation infrastructure capacity on the west coast. In addition, the rail network is also being challenged to meet rising demand. Port backlogs have resulted in some diversion to other ports. This is causing some shippers to be concerned about the future reliability of west coast ports, road and rail services and infrastructure.

In addition to infrastructure capacity, gateway performance is also affected directly by a range of factors, for example: labour market issues including skills shortages in critical fields such as long haul trucking; operating practices in the supply chain; increasing pressures in border management where continued efficiency and greater security must be delivered in the context of rising volumes; and regulatory and economic policies at all levels of government; and municipal land use policies and practices.

A still broader set of issues, reaching far beyond infrastructure, will determine how well Canada takes advantage of the Pacific gateway. These include: trade promotion, sectoral cooperation, and standards harmonization and innovation in the Asia-Pacific context. Concerted efforts in these and other fields are required to ensure that the Pacific gateway's contribution to Canada's prosperity is as great as possible.

•(1215)

[*Translation*]

It has become increasingly apparent that all of the issues affecting the gateway are interconnected. And that is what Canada's Pacific gateway strategy is all about. The strategy has been developed to address the interconnected issues in an integrated way, accelerating the development of the Pacific gateway and its benefits for British Columbia, the other western provinces and the entire country.

The strategy includes capacity investments to improve the performance of the gateway, including infrastructure and connected issues such as border security and labour market issues. The strategy also includes measures that will contribute to how well Canadian businesses take advantage of the Pacific gateway, through building deeper links with the countries in the Asia Pacific region. And federal commitments carry both near-term and long-term benefits.

Canada's Pacific gateway strategy consists of three key components.

First, there is the Pacific Gateway Act, which includes a policy declaration and a new advisory body to address the interconnected issues related to gateway development

Second, there is a package of immediate investments, as announced on October 21, 2005, in Vancouver.

Finally, there are additional funds for further strategic investments over the longer term, including in response to the recommendations of Canada's Pacific Gateway Council.

•(1220)

[*English*]

I would like to talk now a little about the Pacific gateway act. First, the act's policy declaration commits the federal government to the Pacific gateway strategy and defines its essential elements. They are: support for the further development of a world-class multimodal

network of strategic transportation links and transfer points of national significance that is competitive, efficient, safe, secure and environmentally sound; the advancement of an integrated and cohesive set of measures in areas that affect gateway performance and areas that allow Canada to take full advantage of the opportunities it provides; and, the promotion of strategic partnerships and collaboration among governments and stakeholders, including through the creation of Canada's Pacific gateway council.

The job of the council would be to advise decision makers on the full range of transportation and other issues that affect the effectiveness of Canada's Pacific gateway and how well the Canadian economy takes advantage of it. The council would be mandated to work with existing networks of stakeholders active in Canada's relations with Asia-Pacific countries, such as the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, and in gateway issues, such as the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council.

The second part of the strategy consists of specific measures that have been identified which would immediately advance the fuller development of the Pacific gateway.

These measures would be implemented with the participation, where appropriate, of provinces, municipalities and other stakeholders and, in the case of infrastructure initiatives, would include cost sharing requirements. The measures are a total of up to \$125 million to address key capacity and congestion concerns in the B.C. lower mainland and points further east including: up to \$90 million for the Pitt River Bridge and Mary Hill Interchange in the B.C. lower mainland; up to \$30 million for road-rail grade separations in the rail corridor extending from Mission to Deltaport; up to \$3 million for North Portal, Saskatchewan road-rail grade separation; and, up to \$2 million for intelligent transportation system deployment.

The Government of Canada has also committed to contribute to the environmental assessment of the proposed South Fraser Perimeter Road. While the federal government is not committing to fund the project at this time, it will support necessary environmental work and will continue working with the province of British Columbia.

Up to \$20 million would be allocated to the Canada Border Services Agency to support expected increases in traveller and container volumes, courier shipments, air freight, commercial trucking and clearing of goods. Priority would also be placed on increasing border management capacity at marine ports, airports and land border crossings to ensure the flow of lawful people and goods while ensuring public safety and security is not compromised.

Government Orders

Finally, up to \$10 million would go toward developing deeper links with the Asia-Pacific region through Canadian involvement in international and regional standards development and harmonization activities aimed at the Chinese and other emerging markets. This would facilitate market access for Canadian products and services in these markets and support two-way trade.

An additional \$400 million has been identified for future strategic investments, including those in response to recommendations of Canada's Pacific gateway council addressing the range of interconnected issues that affect the full development of the gateway. The future initiatives could include: strategic transportation infrastructure investments; deeper links with Asia-Pacific; labour market initiatives; and investment aimed at ensuring secure and efficient borders at key entry points for the Pacific gateway by addressing the operational demands resulting from increases in trade, visits, immigration and the evolving security environment.

[Translation]

Canada's Pacific gateway strategy is an important part of the Government of Canada's efforts to enhance our long-term prosperity. It is consistent with other major policy directions including those that support sustainable development, the New Deal for Cities and Communities and well-established directions in transportation policy.

The gateway approach is about acting strategically to take advantage of the convergence of opportunities related to geography, transportation and international commerce. It is also about addressing the connections among a wide range of issues that impact the effectiveness of a gateway or corridor including, but going well beyond transportation.

The Pacific gateway is a first because the people of western Canada have done their job over the past 10 years or so. I have committed to develop a national policy framework on strategic gateways and trade corridors that will guide future measures to tailor the gateway approach to other regions. These measures will not be identical to the Pacific gateway strategy, rather they will be tailored to the circumstances and opportunities in the region concerned. The gateway approach also depends on partnership and collaboration not only across modes of transportation, but also across jurisdictions, and across public and private sectors.

We all have reason to be pleased today with this bill, which will finally allow us to develop the extraordinary potential our geography has to offer. Whether in southern Ontario, on the St. Lawrence River, or in the Halifax area, we could develop other corridors, other gateways to promote the development of international trade.

British Columbia has been a leader in this field. It has done its homework. We will now use its experience and support it. We will do the same for western Canada. Based on this experience it is clear that there will be more bills of this kind in order to maximize on the full potential of international trade.

• (1225)

[English]

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my first question for the minister concerns the composition of the board. Would the minister comment on the fairness of appointing two

members from B.C. and only one member from each of the prairie provinces?

My second question concerns the expectation of a possible increase in container traffic of manufactured value added goods and grain coming off the Prairies. People are saying that the bulk shipping of grain might be a thing of the past because the customer will want to have trace back to where the product came from, right to the actual farmer's field. In order to do that a container would have to be used and properly handled.

Some of the numbers that we have been given on the potential increase in container traffic is huge. I do not see the point of setting up an advisory council with a mandate over a number of years when it looks as though it may be six years before it reaches a conclusion. Would the minister comment on what the time line is on some action here?

We need capacity and that capacity has to begin immediately. It is now past due. If we take another length of time to rehash the things, which we already know and which the minister already knows from other sectors that have advised him, why do we need to go through this process to add another length of time when we should actually be putting some money in the ground?

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, the reason two members from B.C. would be appointed to the board and only one from each of the other provinces is that most of the work will be done in B.C. When we talk about congestion, about work being done at the port or about road infrastructure, it obviously will be done in B.C. and those members would have the experience. The Greater Vancouver Gateway Council has been working on this for the last 10 years. We are building on its experience. Provincial Ministers of Transport are happy that they will each have one representative on the board.

This, obviously, is B.C. inspired, and it will be custom designed by western Canada, but it will be for the good of all of Canada. We thought that local representation responded to the needs of the provinces. I have had the support of the four provincial ministers in that regard since the bulk of the work will be in B.C. We also wanted to build on the experience.

The member is right when he says that demand will be huge but I do not see the council preventing us from doing our job. The council would be there to help us prioritize what we should do first. For example, I know we will need to change some of the laws if we want to get truck drivers because there is a shortage of truck drivers in the country. The council would help us establish priorities and probably push us more than anything else.

Government Orders

I do not want a council that prevents us from doing our work. We do need local and regional consultation. The board would be pretty helpful. However, in the meantime we have authorized \$190 million of work. An envelope of \$400 million will be available, not for the council to decide but for the council to make recommendations, and this is only a down payment.

The demand will be huge, which is why we will have people from CN, CP and others involved on the council. We not only need their input, we need to be prepared to enjoy all the benefits of this great opportunity. We need to ensure our infrastructure is in place. I hope the council will help, not delay any project.

• (1230)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I represent an area in northwestern British Columbia with the newest out surge of where Canadian goods are meant to be shipped.

I have a couple of pivotal questions for the minister. The important one, which has not yet been answered, concerns the security costs that the container port in Prince Rupert will have to bear. The security costs at other major ports in Canada have been grandfathered but Prince Rupert has been left out. This is a fundamental question with respect to the development of the port.

The second part of my question is with respect to local communities along the line that will be faced with an increased amount of rail traffic but will not benefit from this increased traffic.

I wonder if the minister would commit to funding the economic diversification we have talked about for many years in B.C.'s resource sector. A number of groups are organizing a conference for interested stakeholders in the northwest. I wonder if he would commit to supporting those efforts and if he could actually be there if it fits into his schedule.

The last question concerns a proportion of the spending. The plans for the northwest port in Prince Rupert show that it will be much larger than the port in Vancouver. When I look at the spending plans I cannot discern whether all the money is headed down to the lower mainland or what the proportion of spending will be between the northern and southern routes, with the northern route needing a huge amount of money because of it being newer and having great potential and not having to fix old congestion but having a clean slate.

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, first, on security costs, while we have a Transport Canada contribution program, it has been very difficult for the port of Prince Rupert to request a contribution because it still does not have the container terminal. We will be there because we want to make Canada's ports the most secure in the world. We want to ensure that it can apply for our help through our contribution program.

On local communities, hopefully the level of traffic and trade will increase and will be served by the new gateway. Hopefully, that will have some benefit to all local communities concerned. I know my colleague, the Minister of Western Economic Diversification, is doing his best to help people enjoy the benefits of that. However, we certainly are going to do whatever we can to maximize the benefits for local communities.

On the spending plans, I would hate to be making those decisions today when we are trying to put together a gateway council. I trust the gateway council will come up with recommendations that are from the bottom up, instead of having those decisions made in Ottawa without proper consultation.

As of now, we have created almost an exemption by funding to the level of \$30 million the container facility at the port of Prince Rupert. We know that port has great potential and we will want to develop its potential with the port authorities and communities. The hopes are high in that region. We already have supported it. Whether it is under the remaining \$400 million or whether it is from other funds that are there, we will need the help of the council to prioritize and see where we can get the most for our buck.

• (1235)

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. minister for his dialogue on transportation. I have a specific question with regard to my riding, which is where the Wabamun spill took place this summer. It is an absolute disaster. I have sent him a couple of letters regarding transportation through the corridor, from Edmonton to Jasper, asking for a reviewing of the rail as well as the maintenance of the schedule on which it is running.

The minister also has to coordinate how transportation works when it comes to natural disasters like this. In this instance four different or ministries were involved, Environment, Transportation, Fisheries and Oceans and Indian and Northern Affairs. How can that kind of an effort be coordinated and streamlined, if it ever takes place again?

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, what happened in the member's riding is a tragedy and none of us want that to happen again anywhere in the country. That is why I have been pretty preoccupied with CN's safety record. I have asked for an audit of its activities. I have met with representatives. I met with the chairman of CN and I said, in direct terms, that I hoped CN would review all its safety procedures. We know a lot can be done for that company, and frankly, I count on it to do that.

I also have written the president and the chairman of CN. I am holding them responsible for the quality of their tracks, their equipment and for all the safety requirements that go with them. Over the next few weeks, hopefully we will have a report back from CN saying that it is going to cooperate.

In the meantime, as to coordination and inquiries, I think most departments have been involved. We always need better coordination. These things are never supposed to happen. I know the Transportation Safety Board and all those people are involved right now. We are waiting for more reports. However, it starts with better safety measures by CN and other companies. I want to ensure that we really insist on that. That is why I have been very active since that accident.

I do not want it to happen again. There are others happening. I do not like what I see and I do not like the reports I get. That is why I have called for action from the president and the chairman of CN and its board. In the end, they will be held responsible.

Government Orders

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, talk about prejudging inquiries. We have a series of derailments with CN and none of them is high profile. What does the minister decide to do? Investigate CN, rather than doing what we have called for, which is to have a comprehensive system-wide review of the CTA and the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act. The government already has decided that CN is the bad guy. It is a question of how bad it has been. Why does he not look at his own department to determine exactly what his department has done in failing Canadians when it comes to rail safety? That is what should be done.

I rise to speak to Bill C-68, the Pacific gateway act. It is past time that the federal government recognize the tremendous economic potential of the Pacific gateway concept, not just for British Columbians but for Canadians from coast to coast. Conservatives have been calling for action on behalf of B.C. ports for years, which makes this debate long overdue.

However, I want to ensure that Canadians, especially British Columbians, understand what the Pacific gateway contains and what it does not, what it is hopeful about and what is hype.

The Pacific gateway act was tabled by the transport minister on October 20, the day before he travelled to B.C. to announce up to \$590 million to support Canada's Pacific gateway strategy.

However, Bill C-68 is not about financial support for making the ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert key transit points for Asia and North American trade. It is not about a massive federal contribution to supporting the B.C. port strategy or the recommendations to the B.C. progress board. In fact, it is not even about a genuine partnership with the government of British Columbia in working toward harnessing the tremendous economic potential of B.C. ports.

Sadly, it is much less. The bill would create a Canada's Pacific gateway council, an advisory council that would recommend to the Minister of Transport how to spend up to \$400 million of the up to \$590 million that the federal Liberals announced in favour of the Pacific gateway initiative.

The Conservative Party of Canada will be supporting this Liberal half-step. We are doing so because while much more could be done for B.C., should be done for B.C., and will be done for B.C. under a new Conservative government, half a loaf of bread is better than nothing to a starving man. Conservatives do see this is a good first step, a small baby half-step, to gaining attention to B.C. that has been lacking in the Liberal government for over a decade.

Genuine support for the Pacific gateway initiative is vitally important and very time sensitive. World trade is expanding dramatically and established trade routes are changing.

Last December, newspapers reported that because of tremendous congestion at the port of Vancouver, global transport companies were shipping cargoes through the Panama Canal and on to Halifax rather than through Vancouver. Normally it takes two weeks to ship a container from Asia to Vancouver and under a week to truck the container to Montreal or Toronto from Vancouver. Last year, due to delays at the port of Vancouver, shipments were running up to two weeks behind, making a 37 day trip from Asia to Halifax through the Panama Canal seem competitive in comparison.

However, the structural challenge we face is not Vancouver versus Halifax. It is Canada versus the United States. If using the Panama Canal makes sense when shipping containers from Asia to Atlantic Canada, it makes even more sense when shipping containers from Asia to Texas, Florida or the U.S. eastern seaboard.

An often unnoticed result in dramatically increased global trade is significantly bigger ships. Whereas in the past large container ships might have had a capacity of 2,250 40-foot containers, new ships carry up to 6,000 containers, or 12,000 TEU. Shippers call such vessels "post-Panamax", meaning that they are too big to get through the Panama Canal. Interestingly, the size of container ships that carry 6,000 containers is also referred to as "post-Suezmax", meaning it cannot feasibly travel through the Suez Canal either.

If such large ships cannot go through either the Panama or Suez Canal on their way from Asia to North America, a very practical high traffic container route would pass through either Vancouver or Prince Rupert and then by rail or truck to the domestic destination.

The good news is that the ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert are ideally geographically positioned to facilitate this rapidly expanding trade and have become engines of economic growth for British Columbia and Canada. The bad news is that we are competing against Los Angeles and other U.S. ports as well as against Central America and a Liberal government that does not get it.

The fact that new ships are too big for the Panama Canal has not gone unnoticed by Panama or by its neighbours in Central America. On the one hand, the Panamanians are trying to estimate the feasibility of making the Panama Canal bigger. On the other hand, in August 1998, Carlos Florez, the president of Honduras, called on his neighbours in El Salvador and Nicaragua to consider jointly building a dry canal to link the Pacific container ports in El Salvador and Nicaragua with the Honduran Atlantic port of Port de Cortés.

At the present time neither the expansion of the Panama Canal nor the construction of Central America's dry canal has started, however, the clock is ticking and shippers are becoming impatient.

● (1240)

As a consequence of these growing international pressures, growing trade and commerce and the clear opportunity before us, it is time for Ottawa to enthusiastically embrace real substantive Pacific gateway initiatives.

Government Orders

Nearly five years ago, in January 2001, the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council made a presentation to the panel reviewing the Transportation Act and stated:

—the movement of international trade and services requires an increasingly efficient, multi-modal transportation system in order to maintain and enhance Canada's competitive position in world markets.

Five years ago, the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council saw the potential and called for action. Today, the Liberals are reacting, but not nearly fast enough nor effectively enough.

One of the things the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council wanted was a "Transport Canada Regional Office Expediter" whose job would be to cut through red tap for transportation system investments deemed to enhance the competitiveness and efficiency of the gateway transportation system.

In the nearly five years since that presentation, international trade has increase almost exponentially, but the Liberals have paid very little attention to the west coast or to the tremendous potential it offers.

Direct federal investment in the Pacific gateway initiative has been minimal. Even if the Liberals actually spend every dime of the promise up to \$590 million, it still will only amount to 17% of the \$3.5 billion that the B.C. government has identified as being necessary to really support the Pacific gateway initiative.

More important, even in those areas where the federal government was not asked to spend a dime, the Liberals complete lack of action is stunning. For example, the port of Vancouver has repeatedly asked to have its borrowing limit eliminated so it may fund its expansion with money borrowed from the market. On February 5 the Minister of Transport raised the port's borrowing limit to \$510 million from the previous limit of \$225 million. By raising rather than eliminating the cap, he shows how little he knows about Canada's transportation system.

Canada's major airports do not have borrowing limits, but then they are not Crown agents whose borrowing is backed by the federal government and the Canadian taxpayer. The obvious solution is to remove the port of Vancouver of its Crown agent status and completely eliminate the borrowing limit. That solution has been proposed by every expert, every stakeholder and business person who has seen the obvious and overwhelming growth potential of our west coast port and the handcuffs that the Liberals have imposed on it.

If this proposal is too aggressive for the minister, then there are other options. For example, it has been suggested that the port authorities be allowed to issue tax free municipal bonds or the government can offer one of the two options to different ports, based on their size and ability to solicit investment capital. Whichever option is chosen, the government needs to consider these ideas because the status quo is standing in the way of aggressive port expansion.

Another policy change that is needed is the ability to allow ports to voluntarily merge for competitive advantage. This would allow ports across B.C. or even just in the Lower Mainland, to voluntarily merge if they see it as being in their competitive interest to do so. This has been done in New York and New Jersey with the

establishment in 1972 of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey with great success.

Another policy change that is needed is reform of security measures at our ports. Since 9/11, security has been a major policy preoccupation. However, implementation of new technologies and procedures has been ill-prepared and poorly implemented from coast to coast.

If Prince Rupert is to become the world class container facility that we Conservatives envision it becoming, if the port of Vancouver is to continue to grow, if the Fraser port, Delta and Nanaimo are to continue to expand, they need a much clearer regulatory framework of port security measures than has been the case so far since 9/11 at our ports.

Another issue that needs to be addressed by the government is the issue of dredging in B.C., particularly on the Fraser River. This has been an issue for B.C. for years and this transport minister has travelled to B.C. numerous times, meeting with key stakeholders, promising the moon, but thus far has delivered exactly nothing.

Allow me to put this issue into some perspective for the House. This issue has been of grave concern for British Columbians for years, not only due to missed economic opportunities, but also due to public safety concerns regarding flooding.

In an effort to call attention to the problem, the city of Richmond considered the issue and moved that the following resolution be adopted and circulated to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Minister of Transport, Richmond, members of Parliament, cities of New Westminster, Surrey, Delta, Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam, districts of Maple Ridge and Pit Meadows and the township of Langley. It states:

WHEREAS in the 1900s, the Federal Government developed and maintained commercial navigation channels in the Fraser River through the construction of training walls and regular dredging programs, and

WHEREAS until 1997 the Federal Government provided capital and operating funds for the said development and maintenance of the Fraser River navigation channels, and

WHEREAS significant waterborne commerce developed in response to the development and maintenance of the Fraser River navigation channels, and

● (1245)

WHEREAS significant flood control benefits resulted from the development and maintenance of the said Fraser River navigation channels, and

WHEREAS users of the Fraser River navigation channels pay a Marine Services Fee to the Canadian Coast Guard but the Canadian Coast Guard does not include development and maintenance of the Fraser River navigation channels as services funded by the revenue generated by the Marine Services Fees, and

WHEREAS neither the Canadian Coast Guard nor the Federal Government now provide capital and operating funds for the development and ongoing maintenance of the Fraser River navigation channels, and

WHEREAS the Fraser River Port Authority has chosen to seek to keep the Fraser River navigation channels operational to the extent of the Authority's limited financial resources and is now the sole funding source for the development and maintenance of the Fraser River navigation channels, including but not restricted to the removal of the annual spring freshet infill in the Fraser River, and

WHEREAS the above mentioned significant waterborne commerce and the flood control benefits will be jeopardized if the maintenance of the Fraser River navigation channels is not continued and infill removed annually, thereby threatening the socio-economic activities occurring on adjacent lands within the boundaries of our City, and

Government Orders

WHEREAS many of the secondary channels, including the Steveston Harbour, are silting up very quickly and may soon become unusable for navigation, and

WHEREAS many of the local dykes in the lower reaches of the Fraser River were constructed under a joint Federal/Provincial/Municipal funding program, and

WHEREAS the Federal Government does not have any current active funding programs which assist local agencies in maintaining or upgrading these dykes, and

WHEREAS when a flood breaches the dykes, Federal Government emergency funds required will be far in excess of prudent expenditures in both dredging and dyke upgrading,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the City of Richmond, in the strongest way possible, request the Federal Government, reinstate the funding for the continuing development and maintenance of the Fraser River navigation channels and dyking system and provide assurance that previous levels of development and maintenance on the Fraser River navigation channels and dykes will be maintained without jeopardy to waterborne commerce and flood control benefits.

This motion was carried unanimously at Richmond city council—wait for it!—in December 2001. It has been almost four years and still the Liberal government, with a Liberal MP for the city of Richmond, has done nothing, absolutely nothing to address this issue. Once elected, a Conservative government would sit down with the province of British Columbia and finally address this issue and offer assistance with the dredging on the Fraser River.

Another area of policy that needs to be addressed but is not in this legislation is the issue of road and highway infrastructure spending. It will not matter how many gateway initiatives are established or how well the port of Vancouver markets itself to the world or how secure our ports are if roads to, from and around the port of Vancouver are congested with surface traffic.

On October 7, 2003 the House of Commons voted 202 to 31 in favour of a motion I put forward calling on the federal government to invest gas tax money into roads. Two years later, the Liberal government has done virtually nothing. The Prime Minister has repeatedly stated that highway funding is a priority but while surpluses grow and gas tax revenues climb, only pennies are trickling into our roads and highways.

In a classic Liberal move on September 22 the transport minister expanded the national highway system by 11,000 kilometres without promising a single dime of federal support for building, maintaining or improving it.

On June 2, 2003 the Leader of the Opposition was the first party leader to propose sharing gas tax money with the provinces and cities. The Prime Minister says he agrees with the idea, but 28 months later the massive gap between what he takes in from gas taxes and what he invests in roads continues to grow.

A Conservative government will walk its talk. We will put gas tax dollars into roads. We will not do what the Liberals have done, which is to announce big spending projects in an election year to gain votes. We will put steady, stable, predictable gas tax dollars into infrastructure so that our provinces and municipalities can build our infrastructure with the next generation in mind rather than the next election in mind, which is all the Liberals have ever done.

Conservatives are offering real solutions to helping Canada's Pacific gateway move from being a Liberal catchphrase to a Canadian reality. Western ports need these policy changes to encourage our expansion now. As evidence, just last Thursday the port of Vancouver made my office aware of the tremendous difference in time required by the government of B.C. and the

Government of Canada to conduct an environmental assessment of port activities.

Whereas the B.C. government can conduct a review within 45 days, six months is the norm for Ottawa. Unless Ottawa can provide the port of Vancouver with a final decision on the results of the Deltaport third berth project environmental assessment by the end of March 2006, federal inaction will hurt the planned expansion of the port of Vancouver.

As I said earlier, we will be supporting Bill C-68 as we recognize and want to encourage the Liberals' small steps in supporting the west coast. At the same time, when Canadians choose to elect a Conservative government, we will put real meat, real substance to our expansion policies. We will use industry expertise and knowledge to aggressively cut through red tape and facilitate a transportation system investment to enhance the competitiveness and efficiency of the gateway transportation system. We will take action, not merely establish more bureaucracy, as the transport minister has done today.

● (1250)

We will use industry expertise and knowledge to aggressively cut through red tape and facilitate a transportation system investment to enhance the competitiveness and efficiency of the gateway transportation system. We will take action, not merely establish more bureaucracy, as the transport minister has done today.

Even though I believe the Minister of Transport is genuinely concerned about the development of a Pacific gateway initiative, I believe his solutions are rooted in a general lack of awareness of how things really work on the west coast.

The fact is that no matter how much study the transport minister's new advisory group does, there are very likely to be few new ideas. This is because the government of British Columbia has already tabled two very comprehensive reports on the Pacific gateway initiative very recently.

On December 16, 2004, less than a year ago, the BC Progress Board, Premier Campbell's blue ribbon panel of business and academic leaders, tabled "Transportation as an Economic Growth Engine". In March of this year, less than six months ago, B.C.'s ministry of small business and economic development and the ministry of transport co-authored the British Columbia ports strategy.

Government Orders

I encourage the transport minister to read those reports. Inside both reports he will find words of wisdom. In neither report will he find the suggestion of creating more bureaucracy. Both reports deal with practical issues, such as how to facilitate dramatic port expansion without clogging up local streets with increased truck traffic and rapidly growing train lines.

Recommendation 1(e) of the BC Progress Board's rail policy suggests proposed tax incentives to encourage the railways to double-stack their containers and double-track their routes to overcome bottlenecks in B.C.

Fortunately for British Columbians, the railways did not wait for the Liberals to act. Within five months, Canadian Pacific Railway had begun a \$160 million expansion of the track network in its western corridor to increase its capacity by 12%, or more than 400 freight cars a day, extending from the prairie region to the port of Vancouver. CPR said its project was in support of the Vancouver Port Authority's expansion plans and the British Columbia government's port strategy to make the province the preferred gateway to North America for growing volumes of finished goods from Asia.

At about the same time, Canadian National announced \$30 million in support of a new container terminal in Prince Rupert. On August 18 it announced it was increasing train capacity for container traffic between the port of Vancouver and Montreal and Toronto by more than 20%.

The railways have acted because they are leaders in the private sector. As senior business leaders, they have learned never to allow Liberal government inaction to stand in the way of pursuing commercial opportunities while being good neighbours.

The BC Progress Board recommended and the railways responded with concrete specific action. It is time for the federal government to do the same.

Both the BC Progress Board and the B.C. ports strategy lay out a very clear plan of action and call on the federal Liberals to respond. The studies and reports have been done. Now is the time to act.

Other countries and governments, from the U.S. to Honduras to China, see the tremendous economic opportunities from increased shipping. We are aggressively and quickly implementing our Pacific gateway initiative. Our geography will give us a competitive advantage to create wealth for a generation of Canadians. The province of British Columbia and the private sector are fully engaged in this project. All that is required for success is for Ottawa to turn its rhetoric and studies and bureaucracy into real policies and true investments so that the expanded Pacific gateway the minister says he favours can actually become a reality and not just Liberal rhetoric.

• (1255)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, that was a well laid out speech and interesting comments, especially laying out the history of what has happened in the long fight that B.C. has had to make, in terms of actually attracting some investment and some interest from the federal government. The member talked of the Asian markets. The importance of Asia has never really been matched by the intent of this government to focus

on British Columbia. We all famously remember the Prime Minister declaring that if he did not fix western alienation, he will have deemed himself to have failed.

My question is around the timing of this announcement. We have seen an unprecedented number of visits from ministers to the west coast, oftentimes not matching the amount of hot air and rhetoric with actual spending and program funding. I wonder if the member can comment on the timing of this announcement, in the context that the government has had a dozen years to really get serious about west coast ports. On the committee and several subcommittees to be set up, what are the odds of avoiding complete failure? We have become very suspicious of patronage appointments and order in council appointments. What legitimacy will the committee have on the west coast if Liberal friends, sponsors and donors are placed on the committee? How viable is this in view of the \$400 million that the committee is meant to be in charge of? How much confidence does the member have and how much confidence should the people of British Columbia have in this plan rolled out today by the government?

Mr. James Moore: Madam Speaker, I think there were three questions. First was the timing of this announcement, why it was now and what I think of that. Second, was the issue of patronage. The third question was the overall issue of western alienation.

I think the Prime Minister was correct in that if western alienation is not properly addressed in his term as Prime Minister, his prime ministership will be deemed a failure. I think by and large the results are in, his prime ministership is a failure on that front.

Western Canadians, particularly British Columbians, are not turning to the Liberal Party and standing up with rounds of applause for this project. They are happy, but as I said in my speech, a starving man will take half a loaf instead of starving to death. That is precisely what we have here, half a loaf.

This is a lateral step. It is not a step forward in actually addressing the concerns that have been raised here. On that front, on the issue of addressing western alienation, I think this comes up far short.

As I said, the minister himself was asked some pointed and specific questions by members of the opposition about what exactly he intends to do. The minister's response was he does not want to prejudge what this consultative body, this Pacific gateway council, will tell him to do.

The Liberals have been in power for over 12 years. The Liberals have been in power since I was 17 years of age. I am 29 now. For my entire adult life the Liberals have been in power.

An hon. member: Hear, hear!

Mr. James Moore: The Liberals should not applaud too quickly. In that timeframe what has been their solution when it comes to transportation issues, aside from bureaucracy and to continue to consult? Two thorough, comprehensive transportation policy documents have just been handed to the government by the BC Progress Board and the provincial government, telling it specifically what to do.

Government Orders

If the Prime Minister wants to address western alienation and if the transport minister really wants to effectively address this issue, they should offer specific solutions, such as the ones outlined in my speech about eliminating the cap, allowing ports to issue bonds, dealing with the dredging issue, dealing with port security. Substantive policy changes need to take place in order for the western Pacific gateway initiative to become a reality, yet the minister proposes more bureaucracy.

This takes us to the third question that my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley asked and that is the whole issue of patronage. On this council that will be a part of this initiative there are no provisions about who will be appointed to this board, except that they will have to come from a series of industry groups. There have to be two from British Columbia, one from Alberta, one from Saskatchewan and one from Manitoba. Those are the only provisions.

Do not be surprised if failed Liberal candidates and failed Liberal hacks and failed Liberal bagmen, or I guess successful Liberal bagmen for that matter, find their way on to that list. The entire council will be appointed by the cabinet on the reference of the transport minister himself. I do not hold any great promise that this process is going to be patronage free or that they will find real solutions.

The Liberal government has had over 12 years to come to this House and to offer substantive, concrete solutions to the Pacific gateway initiative. Instead it has come here offering a bureaucracy. I think that British Columbians will see that this is not helping to tamper down western alienation, but should in fact ignite it even further.

• (1300)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I understand my colleague's passion for this particular subject matter.

The following organizations have issued public statements endorsing the Pacific gateway strategy, Bill C-68; CN, CP, the Port of Vancouver, the Railway Association of Canada. Would the member agree with these stakeholders and also support the strategy regarding Bill C-68?

The member said that he is in favour of regulatory clarity for the transportation industry. Would he support the early passage of Bill C-44, which would provide regulatory certainty on issues such as railway running lights?

Mr. James Moore: Madam Speaker, first of all, on the issue of people who have endorsed the legislation, my name can be added to the list. I have endorsed the legislation because it is a half step in the right direction, but it is not a series of solutions.

My criticism is not that the government is not doing anything, it is that the government is treading water rather than leading forward and aggressively doing something substantive in dealing with these issues. If he wants to add the Conservative Party, we are going to be voting in favour of the bill, not with great enthusiasm but with a why not, it is a small step in the right direction. However, they are not the substantive policies that are needed right now.

I would guarantee the member opposite because I have spoken to CN, to CP, with Gord Houston at the Port of Vancouver, and they are happy with this in a sense, but they would be thrilled if they had a government that was actually going to put forward some substantive policies, the kind of policies that we have decided are needed for the port expansion.

On the second question, we are prepared to sit down with the transport minister and with his office to look at Bill C-44 and the provisions in it. Bill C-44 is flawed. In a minority Parliament situation, omnibus legislation such as Bill C-44 is a huge mistake. Every political party in the House will find flaws in omnibus legislation. In order for the government to pass any bill in the House due to the mathematics of the seat arrangements in the House, the government needs the support of two political parties.

Putting forward omnibus legislation is fundamentally stupid, which is what the government has done. There are provisions in Bill C-44 that we fully support, issues that deal with passenger rail and allowing better clarity and transparency on that front. We support the provision in Bill C-44 that would allow the quick adaptation of a second bridge going from Windsor to Detroit. We support that thoroughly. What we do not support in Bill C-44 are some of the other provisions, the provisions that allow the government to regulate the air industry even further with regard to ticket price.

We do not support making VIA Rail a crown corporation. There are a number of things in the bill that are not good for the transportation industry while some are good. Our party is prepared, as I said openly at the transport committee when the minister was there on Thursday, to sit down with the transport minister, to go through the bill clause by clause, and see if we can find some kind of compromise to divide the bill into those areas that we find acceptable and therefore will find passage, and those that are unacceptable which the minister indicated he is prepared to move on.

• (1305)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech on transportation. I hope some day that the member will be the transport minister and indeed I believe he will be.

I am in a rural riding and agriculture is probably in the biggest crisis that it has ever seen. We have a crisis because of commodity pricing. Although the beef industry is starting to get back with some prices, certainly grains and oil seeds are hurting big time. I do not have to go into the pricing structures and why that is, but I have had a number of calls this past week about the transportation of our grain.

For example, I contacted a couple of elevator operators in my riding. One elevator operation down by Trochu, last year from June until September, loaded a thousand cars. This year it has been 150. In another community, another AgPro elevator operation, in the last two months it has not been able to ship one load of grain because it does not have the cars to transport the grain.

Farmers are beginning to wonder how they will pay their input costs. They are saying they cannot even sell their grain because the elevators cannot take it and the railroads will not move it. The government, again just before an election, is to be given an A for an announcement, but when it comes to delivery, it really fails every time.

Government Orders

Could the member make some comments in regard to some of the frustrations that we are facing out west? We have talked about western alienation. This is part of why we feel that we are being forgotten out west. The government has been in power for 13 years. Now it says it is going to study it. Where has its priorities been over the last 13 years?

Mr. James Moore: Madam Speaker, I thoroughly agree with my colleague from Crowfoot. CN has had great profits this year; so has CP. The issue is not with how the railways are operating themselves. The issue is access to markets and what the government is doing with regard to running rights. There are a whole host of issues the government is not addressing that deal with supporting the port of Prince Rupert and the port of Vancouver.

Let me summarize it. There is a very good reason why in the last four federal elections together, every single rural riding in western Canada, even Quebec with the Bloc Québécois, where agriculture is the number one economic issue, absolutely decimated and defeated the Liberals. It is because for a decade, for my entire adulthood, the Liberal government has done nothing for Canada's agricultural communities and constituents recognize that the Conservative Party has the answers. When we form the government, we will put them into place.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate on Bill C-68, an act to support development of Canada's Pacific Gateway.

This bill provides a policy and management framework for the future development of Canada's Pacific gateway. This new concept of Pacific gateway sounds interesting to us Bloc Québécois members, because it involves a global vision of the chain of transportation and requires a significant improvement of the intermodality between the various means of transportation.

So, the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of this new approach in the transportation sector. This is an approach that we have been advocating for a number of years.

Intermodality has the advantage of combining the strengths of each transportation mode, to make the whole network more effective, both in terms of speed of delivery and consumption of energy. In this regard, the marine-rail combination is particularly effective. It helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while also reducing traffic on our highway system.

The federal strategy recognizes the importance of establishing real cooperation among stakeholders in order to define a consistent transport policy, and this is a good thing in itself. Indeed, in order for integrated management of our transportation network to be effective, there must be a coordinated approach by a number of players, including transportation groups, the private and public sectors, and experts on safety and trade relations.

It is also essential not to manage in silos but, rather, to integrate the various components, namely highway, rail, marine and air transportation, into an organized structure.

In his speech, the Minister of Transport indicated that Transport Canada is currently developing a strategic framework on gateways and corridors. This framework will be used for future initiatives

designed to adapt the gateway approach to other regions. So, the gateway concept could potentially be applicable to the St. Lawrence River, and this is why the Bloc Québécois is taking a particular interest in this bill, since the federal government might decide to duplicate, in Quebec, the approach advocated in western Canada.

International shipping activities on the St. Lawrence River are critical to Quebec's economic development, and they require an integrated and consistent strategy. Therefore, it would be a good thing to eventually apply such a global vision to the St. Lawrence River, which is also a gateway for international trade in Quebec, central Canada and the U.S. midwest.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind hon. members that, in recent months, the Bloc Québécois conducted extensive consultations in all the regions of Quebec, with a special focus on the St. Lawrence River and its economic development potential. We found out that marine transportation industry stakeholders all hope for an improvement of intermodal links between marine and other modes of transportation, and rail in particular.

These consultations also made us realize that an integrated management policy for the St. Lawrence River was urgently required. The federal government's silo management, neglect and lack of vision have significantly hindered the economic development of the river. The concept of a gateway is a step in the right direction, at least for transportation activities. Real integrated management, however, requires that other considerations, such as environmental considerations, be factored in.

Therefore, while we support the bill in principle, I will make a few comments and express serious concerns about the structure that is proposed in the bill and the process for appointing directors, as this structure would be totally unacceptable to Quebec.

One of the key elements of this bill is the establishment of Canada's Pacific Gateway Council, a new advisory council which, as stated in the bill's summary, will be tasked with providing advice and analysis to maximize the effectiveness of the Pacific gateway. More specifically, the council's primary responsibility will be to advise the federal government on how to use the \$400 million that will be invested in western Canada's transportation infrastructure over the next five years.

● (1310)

The wording of the bill is surprising, to say the least. The structure of the council is defined very precisely, while far more important bodies such as the Competition Bureau, are far less precisely defined in their enabling legislation. Yet the bill has nothing to say about its real mandate.

Government Orders

One of my main reservations has to do with clause 6, which sets out the membership of the council. All members are appointed by the federal government. All chosen by Ottawa, including the 11 provincial representatives. What justification can there be for this federalist vision of wanting to control everything? It is all the more surprising because the policy statement refers to the promotion of strategic partnerships and collaboration between governments and stakeholders. This federal desire to control the composition of the council would certainly appear to cast doubt on its representative nature.

Why are the members not appointed by a process that requires the participation of their community of origin? How can there be any reference to partnerships and collaboration if the community cannot be trusted to select its representatives? The most amazing thing is that clause 6 even specifies that the representatives of British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan will be appointed by the federal government. How then can they talk of a shared vision of integrated intermodal transport? In addition to the clause on Ottawa's appointment of the provincial representatives, the bill has nothing to say about the role to be played by the provinces in implementing this national strategy. The information document that goes along with the bill is no clearer. Important questions on the decision-making capacity of the provinces as far as allocation of these vast sums remain unanswered.

Once the council submits its recommendations to the federal government, what is to prevent it from making decisions unilaterally? Can a province reject a decision it does not like? Is the role of the provinces limited to sending to the council a representative appointed by the federal government? There are no answers to those questions. Everything would indicate that the strategy would be imposed on the provinces rather than developed in partnership with them. This aspect of the bill could bring the very effectiveness of the council into question. Given its important mandate, we would prefer an independent and unifying agency. This is not what we are seeing. We fear this agency will become a refuge for Liberal Party friends. You can understand—once bitten, twice shy. We have to make sure that, when the federal government proposes such development strategies, it does so in respectful partnership with the stakeholders in the community and the provinces.

Another aspect also open for discussion is the number of meetings the council is to have. According to clause 8 of the bill, the council must meet only twice a year, and its members' mandate is part time only. That strikes us as very little, given the examinations and recommendations expected of it.

To help it in its work, the council will create two committees with the task of supporting it by supplying it with analyses and advice. The committees are the Pacific Gateway Transportation Advisory Committee and the Pacific Gateway Opportunities Advisory Committee. I have concerns about their roles. Is there not a player overlap and surfeit?

Another important aspect of this bill is its impact on trade with Asia, including the impact of Asian exports on traditional industries. The Bloc Québécois has concerns about the potential impact of rapidly increasing trade with Asia. This part of the world is essentially a pool of cheap labour producing quantities of consumer

goods for a fraction of the cost of their production in Quebec or Canada.

• (1315)

As a result, in traditional industries such as furniture, textiles and clothing, many companies are having difficulty competing with these new producers. This is the reason for the many plant closures and the resulting flood of layoffs.

We are not opposed to an increase in trade with Asia. However, we feel that the federal government must be aware of the impact on workers in traditional industries. Companies must be given time to adjust to the new economic circumstances and assistance programs must be put in place in the most vulnerable sectors.

This is, moreover, something that we have been calling for more than a year for the textile and clothing industries, but the federal government has turned a deaf ear. It is this refusal to recognize reality, combined with the desire expressed in this bill to open up precipitately to the economies based on cheap labour, that worries the Bloc Québécois. The increase in trade with Asia is not inherently bad. However, we need to bear in mind the negative impact on the workers in traditional industries.

It is vital that the federal government provide better support for companies in this industry to enable them to adjust to the new economic realities. In western Canada, British Columbia is the gateway for trade with Asia. The goods arrive primarily through two ports, Vancouver and Prince Rupert, and are then shipped to the centre of the continent along the road and rail corridors.

The rapid growth of trade between Asia—primarily China—and Canada is producing increasingly frequent congestion in the transportation network in western Canada. Although the Port of Vancouver is operating virtually at full capacity, the main problems with congestion are currently occurring in the road and rail networks of British Columbia and Alberta.

The effects of the congestion can be felt as far as the head of the network. Because of delays in the Port of Vancouver, goods have recently had to be diverted to other ports on several occasions. This has generated concerns among shippers about the future reliability of the transportation infrastructure on the west coast. It is worth noting in this connection that the British Columbia ports are in direct competition with the American ports, which will soon be enjoying massive investment, since the United States government has announced its intention to invest \$286.5 billion over five years in its transportation network to increase trade flows.

There is no doubt that every effort must be made to maximize international trade flows and to become even more competitive in world markets. It is thus essential to develop a strategy to increase the efficiency of the transportation network, specifically by encouraging intermodal freight movement. This is a laudable principle, but a number of questions remain. We must ensure that the structures we put in place address the needs of the various players.

Government Orders

The federal government's strategy must not be limited exclusively to western Canada. There are also gateways in Quebec. The St. Lawrence must be recognized by the federal government as a strategic engine of economic development. The trade prospects for intermodal transportation are just as important for Quebec as they are for western Canada.

I would remind the Minister that the St. Lawrence exists and that it has extraordinary development potential. I would urge the Minister of Transport to address the needs of industry in terms of investment for Quebec, to safeguard its competitive position in international trade.

• (1325)

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's comments. We certainly appreciate the support that the Bloc Québécois is giving to the bill. At the end of the day, after all the concerns that the member articulated, she knows full well that the bill helps all Canadians from coast to coast, including her constituents in the province of Quebec.

Let us imagine for a moment that the federal government chose not to take advantage of burgeoning markets in the far east. Let us imagine for a moment that we decided to sit still. In trade, if we do not evolve, if we are sitting still, we are moving backwards. That is not an option for the government. It is not an option for Canadians. It is not an option for the Canadian economy.

This Pacific gateway plan deals with the concerns that the member has articulated. She talked about intermodal transportation and coordination of transportation. It also deals with security of transportation arteries, which we know is very important these days with respect to the threat of terrorist attacks. That is what the plan is all about.

I would like to ask the member a simple question. She said that this is a plan that improves British Columbia and the west. It absolutely is, in part because our geography on the west coast of Canada provides a two day advantage in terms of sailing times from the far east to Canada, so there is a reason for that.

Does the hon. member also not acknowledge the fact that while this gateway strategy is centred on improving and maximizing our ability as a nation to take advantage of markets on the west coast, exporters and importers in the province of Quebec equally will benefit from this opportunity? Does she not also recognize that the secretariat we have put together is absolutely essential to ensuring that Canadian taxpayers' money, which has gone into this investment, is utilized in the most responsible way possible to maximize the benefit for Canadians from coast to coast?

I ask her that. This is not exclusive to any other investments that we as a government have made for eastern Canada and central Canada, including her province of Quebec. Does she not recognize that her exporters also will benefit from the Pacific gateway strategy?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Madam Speaker, to begin with, I want my colleague to know that we are indeed in favour of the bill in principle. I said so in my speech. We have a number of reservations,

as do the people involved. In fact, the marine industry wants the St. Lawrence in Quebec also to be recognized by the federal government. However, we hear nothing from the Minister of Transport and his government about any measures.

Yes, we are in favour of this bill in principle, and we are pleased for western Canada. Congratulations to them on getting their Pacific gateway. However, I would like this government to explain—and we have some questions for the minister—how this will benefit the marine industry in Quebec directly. We get nothing: this government constantly penalizes the marine industry.

But injecting \$400 million for a gateway in Western Canada is a much easier thing to do and can be done much quicker. A consensus is reached with western Canadian partners, but when it comes to Quebec, it always a nuisance, more difficult and a lot harder to get a response.

Furthermore, we have other reservations about the entire question of appointments. We all know what has happened in the past. Every time this government sets up boards or committees or the like, unfortunately it is often just to appoint friends of their party. This very rarely serves the people of Quebec or even of Canada.

Whether for returning officers during elections or, now, for Canada's Pacific Gateway Council, will we have any guarantees that people will be chosen together with industry stakeholders in all transparency and that they will be chosen for their skills? They must not just be selected as a favour because they were good party candidates or because they were defeated.

We have several reservations of this kind. We will come back to them and ask more questions of the minister.

• (1330)

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin: Madam Speaker, I want to give the hon. member across the way some good news because I know how important shipbuilding is for her province, as it is for mine of British Columbia.

The Minister of Industry is working with his counterparts and the private sector and all interested groups in Canada to put together a new shipbuilding strategy. This strategy will enable us to compete more aggressively in the future for niche markets and will provide opportunities for Canadian shipbuilders and shipping repair groups to compete internationally and provide for our domestic needs. This is important for her province of Quebec, for the Maritimes and my province of British Columbia.

Many of us have worked for some time to bring together the private sector and the various ministers to do this. This government and the ministers involved are seized with this very exciting opportunity.

Government Orders

Members of the private sector in her province of Quebec are working with our government to provide this opportunity and this shipbuilding strategy, which will enable Canadians to work here in highly paid jobs in niche markets, in shipbuilding and in ship repair. As we know, we have numerous domestic needs, from the Coast Guard to the Department of National Defence, with respect to the shipbuilding industry.

I also want to draw to her attention the fact that the Minister of Transport is from Quebec and has been working very hard on transportation issues in Quebec. He has done a lot of work in that area. I am somewhat flummoxed, to put it mildly, that the member would not acknowledge the fact that the Minister of Transport, as the minister from Quebec, has done a lot of work in this area.

I also want to assure her that the people who are to be on those boards will be chosen on merit and obviously will be accountable to the people of this country and the government. At the end of the day, their actions and how successful they have been will be judged publicly.

We are fairly confident, based on the support we have seen across party lines, that this is a very positive thing for Canada and a positive initiative for Canadians. It will make a huge difference in our ability as a trading nation, an exporting nation, to continue to be competitive, create highly paid jobs in our country and improve the health and welfare of all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Madam Speaker, I do not know whether the hon. member was being ironic when he said that the Minister of Transport is from Quebec and that he has been working very hard on transportation issues in Quebec. In fact, I would have liked the hon. member to elaborate and tell us what exactly the minister has done for Quebec. Personally, since the minister took office, I have not seen him do anything for Quebec. On the contrary, he keeps quarrelling and fighting. The fact that he is from Quebec does not really mean anything. Today, we have before us a bill that benefits western Canada.

The fact that the Minister of Transport is from Quebec does not mean anything. In my opinion, it does not mean that this bill will be good for Quebec. Usually, when federal government members come from Quebec, they often do us more harm than good. That was a short digression in response to the member's comment.

As for the rest of his remarks, I remind the hon. member that the bill is silent on the role of the provinces in the implementation of Canada's Pacific gateway strategy, and it is also silent on the true mandate of the council. As I mentioned in my speech, many questions remain unanswered, and the member's comments do not shed light on the concerns that the Bloc Québécois has at this point.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, the government has brought in legislation, at a very suspicious time in our electoral process, with little to no hope of it getting passed through. It raises a suspicion of electioneering at a time when the west coast of Canada needs sound investment and a sound strategy to actually achieve the status on international trade that we have talked about in this place for many years but have done little to support.

The Pacific gateway strategy, Bill C-68, which has been a long time coming and which was thrown together and presented on the west coast with little chance of making it through this House, leads one to all levels of suspicion. While the intent of the bill is perhaps good, the timing erodes any confidence that Canadians should have in the government's attempt to, as the Prime Minister put it, finally end western alienation as a mark of his prime ministership. I would suggest that once again he has failed the west coast, British Columbians and Canadians in general.

With respect to the vitality of these ports and shipping routes, few Canadians realize that shipping a product from central Canada or the United States via the northern route, in particular, through the Port of Prince Rupert, is three days shorter than any other known route on the continent right now. In terms of saving time, energy and money for Canadian businesses and for our American partners who want to join with us in manufacturing, this is the route to go and yet for almost three decades the Port of Prince Rupert has had to struggle to get the attention that we finally got by, I would suggest, potentially electing a New Democrat to the region, enabling the government to pay some attention, at long last, to invest in the container port in Prince Rupert. Now we have Bill C-68, which is too little too late.

I previously asked the minister what interest he had in participating in the region where much of this line through this so-called Pacific gateway will pass, a region that has been plagued by the boom and bust cycle of much of the resourced-based economies in Canada, the inability to attract the proper investment for secondary manufacturing, the inability to attract the political will to solve some of the problems that affect the region, the province and, as such, the entire country. I would point to the softwood lumber dispute, bugwood and a number of other issues that the government has found a way to ignore in its time in office.

Infrastructure in British Columbia has been neglected for a number of years. Report after report has shown us that. Whether it is the infrastructure in the lower mainland, whether it is some of the transportation around the province or the main corridors of transportation, such as the one we are talking about today through the northwest of British Columbia, we know that neglect has held Canadian productivity back and has held our ability back to truly access the Asian markets in a meaningful way.

The bill was introduced late, without a lot of specifics but with a lot of fanfare. The Auditor General recently handed down a report that the government has a penchant and excitement for announcements but is often gone before the confetti hits the floor. The actual rolling out of its decisions and strategies is a long time in coming, if we ever see them at all.

Government Orders

The actions this past year in the Port of Vancouver by the Trucking Associations and independent truckers show how susceptible the facilities are and how close we are with our transportation in this country to near and total shutdown. The government is unwilling to step in and start to make the investments and alleviate some of the problems that are happening in our transportation corridor. In a heartbeat we could lose that connection to the rest of the world. One of the key advantages we have in British Columbia and in this country is our incredible and close access to some of the greatest and strongest growing markets in the world.

As we explore these markets, what is also seemingly to be absent is that when our trade delegations are here in Canada, before leaving for places like China, they are strong on the human rights and environmental front and yet when they arrive in Asia Pacific, when they arrive in China, nought is to be seen. There is no improvement on the human rights issue within China. There is no official talk and calling into question the human rights abuses that go on.

● (1335)

A Chinese state-owned firm run by a Communist, a completely non-transparent government, recently made a proposition to buy the Noranda Company in Canada, one of our major resource companies, with nary a word of concern in the House from the government benches.

We have opened the doors to 11,500 foreign acquisitions and counting without one concept that one of those deals may actually have been bad for the people of Canada. What an incredible string of good luck. The government is suggesting that acquisition after acquisition by foreign companies, and in this case, a Communist foreign government, our government's wide open door policy is in listening to Bay Street rather than main street, reigns supreme again.

In terms of transportation, we are the only G-8 country that has no long term sustainable national highways program. We do not see the concept of actually investing strategically in our highway systems to improve on efficiency and lower some of the pollution and congestion that Canadians face every day. The government has had no real interest for 13 years and counting, unfortunately, in developing a strategy and engaging the provinces and the municipalities that are in such desperate need. Instead it makes announcements, such as the gas tax rebate, that are gone before the confetti hits the floor. We wait for the details but they never come.

The United States just committed \$270 billion to improving its highway system. In Canada the silence is deafening as to how we are going to improve the efficiency and the capacity of our transportation system.

As many of the previous speakers have pointed out, the bill is very short on details. It contains broad sweeping terms about a strategy, as if somehow the idea of Asian markets and moving Canadian goods to Asian markets is new to the government, so it should set up committees to look at where the investments should be.

After so many years in office, after so many articles written and after so many delegations, team Canada trips, et cetera, now the Liberals introduce a bill to the Canadian people that is short on specifics with some notion of setting up a committee with a budget of something like \$35 million to, I assume, take trips. We are meant

to believe that appointments to the committee will be based on merit. I suggest that one of the key merits will be, among others, participation in the Liberal Party of Canada. The record of the government in terms of appointing people through the patronage system is deplorable at best.

The confidence we are meant to feel in the committee that will be in charge of the \$35 million budget initially and then in an increased budget of \$400 million in deciding where the funding spending is actually going, will be anything but transparent. It will be anything but an ethical progress through putting good decision makers in key roles to help this country. I will be very curious as to what the expenditures of the committee are going to be to rack up \$7 million, particularly if there is any patronage involved whatsoever.

Skeena—Bulkley Valley, the region I represent, is the terminus point for this investment. The plans for the container port and many other port facilities within the region are the first spark of hope in a region that has experienced a loss of almost half of the population of the city. It experienced 20% and upwards unemployment rates which is absolutely devastating. It is devastating not just on the economic front, but on the social front, on the community's cohesion and on the ability to raise children in the confidence they will be able to progress through their entire education in one place. All of that has been put under threat over the last number of years. Now we have a spark of hope that this community can raise its head with confidence and pride and march forward.

The question is whether the government is willing to participate with all the other communities down the line in northwestern British Columbia who have experienced equally, if not worse, economic conditions. I was recently in Hazelton, British Columbia, a very small, beautiful, picturesque town that has consistently had upwards of 80% unemployment over the last seven years, numbers that are staggering, incomprehensible to most Canadians, and yet these people have been surviving in whatever way they could over the last number of years and now the opportunity arrives of a major corridor passing through.

My office has been working with community groups to help coordinate the conversation that has been long overdue. If this container port proceeds, which it will, and if this major transportation corridor receives the investment from the federal coffers that it should, how will communities like Hazelton benefit? How is it that they will finally start to diversify their economy? How is it that their children will start to feel that sense of hope that they can potentially live, thrive and survive in this community and potentially raise their own families and start to create that growth that is so desperately needed in a region that has just gone through boom after bust after boom after bust?

● (1340)

During the take note debate on the softwood lumber dispute last week the government rattled its sabre again and said how NAFTA should be respected. The Conservative Party's solution was to send a special envoy, its solution to a debate that has raged on while our American counterparts refuse to accept the deal that they signed.

Government Orders

The residents in my region are wondering at what point the government will get serious about the softwood lumber dispute. My constituents want the government to use the tools that we know will bring that issue home to the voters in the United States, which will then bring that issue home to the Congress and the Senate to actually get the Bush administration moving toward some sort of fairness. The U.S. government claims fairness but never moves toward it.

Instead we get the suggestion of a special envoy from the Conservatives, a vague notion of something that has little or no consequence in the circles of power in Washington. From the Liberal Party of Canada, the party that is supposed to be championing this, we get radio addresses rattling the swords but no actual concrete action to end this travesty in our trade relations.

The mountain pine beetle has been absolutely crushing to the economy of the interior of British Columbia and the northwest region of British Columbia. This infestation now has the potential to move over the Rocky Mountains into the boreal forests and perhaps it finally will get the attention in this place that it deserves. To truly diversify these economies that have been affected by bugwood they will need major investments.

These are proud and hard-working people who simply want the tools to facilitate their own growth and future prosperity. These people are not looking for handouts or government largesse. They want to do the work to put their communities back on their feet and get moving but they need the attention of the government which has focused other ways.

We saw a collapse in the sockeye fishery earlier this year, an industry that is increasingly important to the people on the west coast, but the government was not present on the issue. We made some small suggestions in order to keep the boats on the water for next season. Hope springs eternal in the mind of the fishing fleet in British Columbia despite the continued mismanagement of the fishery by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The government was completely absent from the issue. It paid no attention whatsoever in any meaningful kind of way. We are seeking local control of that fishery. We have proposed a number of options so the government can save some face. These options that would allow the people of the northwest to realize the prosperity that they need.

At some point we must decide as a nation, and I think my region is actually representative of this, to no longer simply be the hewers of wood and drawers of water. As a nation we need to make those key investments that our counterparts in the other developed nations of the world have continuously made over the last number of decades.

We can no longer rely on a low Canadian dollar and high commodity prices. We need to build together as a nation the investments that are required for those communities to rise up and to avoid the boom and bust cycles that are absolutely devastating to these small towns and communities right across the country. We need to make the investments that make sense.

Will there be an on and off ramp on this major highway going to the Asia Pacific and the mid-west and mid-eastern United States and Canada? Will there be access and opportunity? When I asked the minister this question I received a vague answer, which is similar to

the bill. He said, "We encourage...it is interesting...of some note". We need specifics.

The people of western Canada, of British Columbia, of central and eastern Canada, of Quebec and the Maritimes needed specifics. They needed to know that the government was moving and progressing toward a very specific and concrete strategy to get this off the ground. After 13 years in power it is as if the government just woke up to the idea that trade with Asia was important enough to invest in key and critical places, rather than setting up a potential patronage committee of five to seven members who will be making recommendations over some years. All of this is in a bill that was introduced a few weeks before the House rises for the Christmas break and potential prorogation, if one were to listen to the rumours flying about this place, but with no serious intent of the legislation being passed.

The government made no serious attempt to introduce the legislation at a time when this could have seen the light of day and could have come before this House for a vote. The committee could then have had enough time to hear the witnesses and experts to find out whether the bill was too vague or whether it was strong enough to actually support the investment.

• (1345)

I asked the minister some specific questions on security measures that are important to the port of Prince Rupert. It has been asking, for a number of months, that the investments made by the different investors in Canada and North America would be held secure, that security would be held on a level playing field with the other ports in Canada. Again, I received a vague answer back. It is very disconcerting and very difficult for those people in the northwest of British Columbia to feel confidence.

We are talking about the diversification of our economy and the inclusion of the communities in a meaningful way. I will be calling upon the government to support the efforts in the northwest for the communities to actually participate. They could help design this project and help design the container port and the routes that CN is building, so that they may actually access this and receive the investments from the massive EI surplus that the government sloughs every year into general revenue.

This remains a disgrace and a blight in this country. It remains an issue that absolutely cuts to the heart of where the interests actually lie, whether it is fairness for employees and employers or is some sort of piggybank that the government can keep going back to while regions like Hazelton, Prince Rupert, Kitimat and Terrace suffer without the proper investments that were collected on their behalf to ensure that the education and training would be there for them when it is needed.

We need to actually attract those manufacturing facilities, those secondary manufacturing places, so that the resources that we have—and we often forget that the resources are ours. There is a mantra in British Columbia politics right now that is not a right or a left; it is a debate about who these resources actually belong to, the water, the minerals, the wood of this country. Who do they belong to? Do they belong to a multinational firm making a bid on it or do they belong to the people of Canada? Do they belong to every resident within this country?

Government Orders

If the government actually acted that way when it was dealing with foreign acquisitions and dealing with foreign governments in attracting that type of investment, a pride would be present in those negotiations and a confidence that all Canadians would feel about this endowment, this blessing that we have, to be born in this country with the resources that are available to us. We do not want an open-door policy where a come one, come all, lowest bidder, lowest common denominator will have access to everything that we have been endowed with.

This has to fundamentally change. We need to address our trading partners. We need to look to foreign governments that have an interest in participating here with a certain sense of confidence that there is something here that they want. If there is something here that they want, they must negotiate with us on our terms. They must be willing to negotiate with us on human rights issues. They must be willing to negotiate with us on environmental standards.

Perhaps the government has a certain level of shame in this and does not want to bring an issue like human rights to the table because we have the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister condemning the new Iranian president's comments on Israel while at the same time deporting people to that very same government, participating with the United States and deporting people to places like Syria.

What record do we have to stand on when it comes to the environment, when report after report comes out locating Canada near the bottom of the pack when it comes to the performance of developed countries? Perhaps the government feels a certain amount of shame, then, bringing up those issues with our foreign competitors and our foreign partners. Maybe we finally hit upon the reason why they are often exempt from this discussion in any kind of a meaningful way.

The timing of this is suspect. I looked through the bill and the first nations consultation is near to absent. There is one small place for first nations and 30% of the people in my riding are first nations. The courts have spoken time and time again about the need to consult in a meaningful dialogue with first nations prior to any major development, any major action happening within their territory and yet, when I look through this bill, it is near to absent.

When I talk about first nations representatives within my region, they are considered at the very end of the process, as opposed to up front in a meaningful way. It seems the government has a hard time catching up with some of the fundamental decisions that have been made in this land, Sparrow, Delgamuukw and the rest.

There needs to be a true exchange. There needs to be a recognition that the resources that we are talking about, and are so often called upon to sacrifice to is ours. This is our place. This is our country. These are our resources. When we develop links like this, they must be done in a transparent way, where the people of Canada feel ownership over the development, where all peoples of Canada feel an empowerment to directing the government.

Introducing a bill at a very suspicious time prior to an election with little chance of the normal passage and with the government paying attention to a very key trade and western issue happens at a time that leads us to great suspicion at this end of the House.

• (1350)

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to say to my new friend from Skeena—Bulkley Valley that I was a little underwhelmed with his speech.

I know members of Parliament who have come from that area and Mike Scott comes to mind. He came here and represented his area. Considering that this is an issue that has direct relevance, particularly to Prince Rupert and secondarily to Kitimat, I am surprised that the member did not have more facts and figures, and was prepared to stand up more for his constituency.

We heard again and again all of the platitudes and NDP bromides, but we did not hear anything specific from him for his constituents. Even the previous member, Andy Burton, would come here and act in a very solid way for his constituents. I wonder if it was the fact that this bill only came down last week and perhaps the member did not have time to get all of his facts and figures together. However, surely to goodness, we should be hearing specifically about how many millions of dollars are going to be required in Prince Rupert for the facilities. What are the facilities going to be?

He should be talking about the upgrading of the rail links, the fact that the tunnels are going to have to be made larger for the double-stacked containers, and the pipeline that is currently being considered. What will that mean to the people of Kitimat? I say with the greatest of respect that I was quite underwhelmed with the member and the way that he just did not represent his constituents.

I wonder, though, if he would care to comment on the fact that of the \$590 million announced by the Liberals, up to \$125 million over five years in transportation infrastructure is earmarked, but in fact \$90 million of that is going to be used for construction of the Pitt River bridge. Although millions of dollars have been announced, in fact what we require in British Columbia is at least \$5 billion not \$590 million.

Again, speaking of underwhelming, certainly the resources that are being brought to this question by the Liberals are indeed very underwhelming and represent, at the very best, only a down payment in what we are going to require in British Columbia.

• (1355)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague also fails drastically on specifics. He mentioned some former members of the House that represented the region, ignoring that in the short tenure that the NDP has had in this region, it has achieved more economic stimulus and federal investment dollars than at any time in the prior 12 years.

It has been successful in finally attracting the investment that the stakeholders in the region of Prince Rupert, Kitimat and other regions have called for. They said they needed the federal government to show up with a portion of investment, \$30 million, to make the container port a possibility and that arrived. The NDP delivered after 11 years of Conservative, Reform, Alliance, or whatever the flavour of the month at the time. Mr. Burton had five incantations while in office, which is an extraordinary number of different parties to represent all at the same time.

The member mentioned another former member of this place who represented the constituents of his riding, 30% of which are first nations. Yet he stood in the House day after day after day condemning the Nisga'a agreement from a party that also spoke against the Tlicho agreement and first nations finally coming to some resolution on the land terms.

I sat with a bunch of mining investors and major company officials from the mining sector some weeks ago. They stated factually that until first nations rights and titles are settled on the land base, it makes investment in the northwest of British Columbia, in a serious way, a near impossibility. Yet, for almost a dozen years there were members from that corner of the House representing a view that was contrary to the interests of first nations and contrary to the interests of people in my region.

It is very difficult for me to stand and actually offer any sort of credibility to that line of questioning while we have just begun to finally turn this economy around in the northwest and Skeena—Bulkley Valley. All the key economic indicators from key economic groups within B.C. are pointing to a resurgence in the northwest of British Columbia.

I do not expect the member opposite to offer any credit to the NDP finally having pushed those issues in our region. I do not expect to take all the credit because there has been hard work by many people in this region, but for him to stand and suggest that I do not fight for the interests of my region, perhaps we need to have another conversation after this debate.

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I cannot believe what the member just did. His riding, of all ridings, will benefit above all else with respect to the bill. His riding, which has had historically high unemployment levels, will benefit dramatically.

My question is very simple. Does the hon. member not recognize that this is the government that put together the cities agenda? Does he not recognize that British Columbia was the first province to sign on to that? The moneys are to be spent on critical infrastructure, sewers, transportation arteries and an environment aspect to boot?

Will the hon. member say to the people of his riding of Skeena—Bulkley Valley that he opposes the bill or will he say that he embraces it wholeheartedly and compliments the Government of Canada for introducing the bill for the benefit of his people, the province of British Columbia and Canadians from coast to coast?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, I think the member confuses an announcement with actual work done. Being in office for 13 years, the opportunity existed for true investment in that region but it was neglected.

Some few parliamentary weeks before an election, the government suddenly sees the light of day and expects everyone to slap it on the back for it. It leads one to a certain level of cynicism and it supports the findings of the Auditor General that the government is much more interested in announcements than it is in actually doing the work to set the economy back on its feet.

If the hon. member expects me to be not critical of the government for introducing a bill so late in the session, with so few details, where

there is the potential of a huge patronage appointment set up within the bill, then he has another thing coming.

S. O. 31

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

HOUSING

Hon. Judi Longfield (Whitby—Oshawa, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that October is renovation month. For 16 years, the Canadian Home Builders' Association has been celebrating the renovation season by providing consumers with information on home renovations as well as showcasing the building industry's professionals and their services and products.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Canada's national housing agency, works with home builders to share with consumers a wealth of housing information and know-how.

CMHC helps point Canadians in the right direction when faced with decisions about buying, renovating and maintaining their homes. By advising Canadians to consult accredited housing experts when required, we echo this year's theme of "Do it right! Work with a professional".

Through publications such as "Hiring a Contractor", CMHC provides free renovation information, including contractor agreements and a checklist to ensure that renovations are carried out properly. CMHC is also there to provide practical information on how to improve the energy efficiency of homes.

As a leading source of objective, reliable housing information, CMHC is committed to helping Canadians access a wide choice—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Hallowe'en the scariest thing we have in Canada is the government's trade policy and the lack of action of our Prime Minister in the softwood lumber dispute.

In the last few months, the Prime Minister's policy has changed no less than five times. At first we were negotiating with the United States, then we pulled out of negotiations and then we were not negotiating with the Americans. Suddenly he was prepared to negotiate with them, and now, of course, the Prime Minister is not prepared to negotiate with them.

I have two questions for everyone in the chamber. After last week, will the Prime Minister have any time to resolve the softwood lumber dispute? After last week, will the president have any time to resolve the softwood lumber issue?

Bill C-364, the trade compensation act, would solve this dispute. It would keep Canadian industry alive and send a strong signal to the United States that Canada supports its industries, all of this with a minimum cost to taxpayers.

S. O. 31

The bill is a vote for exporters, for softwood lumber producers, for farmers and for manufacturers, for everyone in Canada. The bill is fair, it is good business and it must go through for our industry to survive.

* * *

GOLF

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honour of Robbie Collins. Mr. Collins is the perennial club champion at the Yarmouth, the Pubnico and the Clare golf clubs. On August 28, 2005, he won the Canadian mid-amateur golf championship held in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

As only the second Nova Scotian to win a championship at this level, Mr. Collins deserves our recognition. Winning at this level is not new for Robbie. In 2001, he was part of the Nova Scotian team that won the Willingdon Cup team event at the Canadian amateur golf championship.

These achievements demonstrate Mr. Collins' commitment and dedication to his sport. He exemplifies the best of what can be accomplished through hard work and dedication.

I ask my hon. colleagues to join me in congratulating Mr. Collins on his historic win.

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[*Translation*]**ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Abitibi-Témiscamingue international film festival is being held from October 29 to November 3. This joyful celebration of cinematic arts is an extremely important event that is drawing the attention of cultural media in Quebec and elsewhere.

For the 24th year in a row, this festival, with its program scripted in detail by an experienced team, is an opportunity for film buffs, actors, journalists and cinematic artists to join together in a spirit of conviviality and share a passion that creates a bond beyond compare.

For six days, Abitibi-Témiscamingue is in full swing. Restaurants, hotels and theatres focus on this event, along with the media, businesses and local organizations, to make it the best possible experience for festival-goers and residents.

The Bloc Québécois salutes the daring and genius of the organizers of the Abitibi-Témiscamingue international film festival. Long live the festival.

* * *

●(1405)

[*English*]**ARTS AND CULTURE**

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to highlight the importance of the arts in Canada. The arts enrich our lives and promote an international reputation for excellence, innovation and creativity. They reflect our unique Canadian experiences and perspectives.

In addition, there is tangible proof of their importance. For example, the arts add an estimated \$39 billion annually to the gross domestic product and are responsible for 600,000 jobs across the country.

Canada's future depends on creativity and imagination, which inspire Canadian innovation and, in turn, our ability to generate social and economic growth.

For those individuals who work tirelessly in the arts and cultural sector, let me note that their dedication to enriching Canada does not go unnoticed.

* * *

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians in my riding and across the country are wondering what kind of tricks to expect from the Liberal government on the eve of the interim Gomery report. They are sitting on the edge of their seats, expecting the magic of the Liberal damage control team to make the ugly reality of Liberal corruption disappear into thin air.

It seems that the Liberals have not yet learned the most basic of life's lessons: that one cannot achieve the right results by the wrong means. They tried to buy the loyalty of Quebeckers, but landed up insulting them in the most grievous way. How ironic that the Liberals, claiming to be the saviours of Canada, are themselves the greatest threat to national unity. Separatism in Quebec and disenchantment across the country have reached an all time high.

I urge Quebeckers and all Canadians to turf these corrupt Liberals. I urge them not to waste their votes on parties that cannot muster enough seats to replace the Liberals. Only the Conservatives have the numbers and it is high time to get a trustworthy, reliable, clean, honest government.

* * *

[*Translation*]**50TH ANNIVERSARY OF UNICEF**

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 50th anniversary of UNICEF Canada and, this evening, millions of children in Canada will collect money for UNICEF.

[*English*]

It was 50 years ago today that Canadians first found little goblins at their doors trick or treating for donations to UNICEF. As a former officer with UNICEF in west Africa, I can speak first-hand about the importance of these donations.

[*Translation*]

UNICEF is dedicated to protecting the rights of children and depends entirely on donations.

[*English*]

Since 1955 Canadian children have raised \$87 million for UNICEF. This year's goal is to raise \$4 million for schools, teacher training, and books in Africa.

I encourage all Canadians to put aside a few loonies tonight for the good goblins with the bright orange boxes. I congratulate UNICEF Canada on its 50th anniversary.

* * *

[Translation]

ADISQ GALA

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, over the past week and culminating last evening, the personality of Quebec song in its many facets based on a distinct experience and consciousness expressed itself most eloquently for the 27th year at the ADISQ gala.

On behalf of my Bloc colleagues, I express my pride and admiration for all the artists and craftspeople in Quebec's musical milieu for their wonderful work, be they winners or not.

Their potential is enormous, but it must be noted that the federal government, scourge of Quebec and Canada's cultural sovereignty, is not striving to protect francophone song and to ensure its longevity and popularity in that new broadcast space made available by satellite radio.

When francophone content on commercial radio is reviewed, we call for more space to be given to these extraordinary voices coming out of Quebec.

* * *

MARK LOWRY

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today, to recognize Mr. Mark Lowry, who passed away Saturday, October 22nd after a two-year battle with cancer. Mr. Lowry was the Executive Director of Sport for the Canadian Olympic Committee.

[English]

Mr. Lowry worked throughout his career at the local and national levels of amateur sport. He held positions with the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union, the Canadian Amateur Rowing Association, the Canadian Amateur Diving Association, the World University Games and the Canadian Olympic Committee.

His dedication, passion and vision have led to significant advancements for Canadian sport and athletes.

[Translation]

Mr. Lowry was a dedicated worker and true believer in the Olympic movement.

I wish to recognize his great contribution to sport and offer my condolences to his family and friends.

* * *

[English]

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the introduction of Bill C-407 on assisted suicide has once more brought to this House a bill dealing with the precious gift of life.

S. O. 31

Many in this House will express their painful choices and divulge a wrestling deep within their souls.

This issue is only difficult if one holds to a material, chance view of the universe, if one holds purely utilitarian values, and if one denies that there is an intrinsic value in human life. It can only be tortuous if one holds that the underlying validation of life is wanton service of self.

For those of us who acknowledge that life has value distinct beyond all else, our choice will be instinctive. Our choice will be the affirmation of the immense value of the most vulnerable of our society, a reiteration that every person is of immeasurable worth.

When a society in any way invalidates the sanctity of life, it throws in its lot with evil incarnate. As members of this House, let us do better. Let us choose life. Life: what a beautiful choice.

* * *

●(1410)

KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year Kiwanis International celebrates 90 years of serving the children of the world.

There are more than 600,000 members of Kiwanis in 96 countries.

In 1994, Kiwanis International promised the children of the world to eliminate the most prevalent preventable cause of mental retardation: iodine deficiency. This goal is imminent and will rank as one of the world's greatest health achievements.

Last Friday Ottawa hosted Kiwanis International President Steve Siemens as Rideau Kiwanis celebrated its 50th anniversary. Today we welcome to Ottawa Hazel Brandon of Suriname, the governor of the Eastern Canada and Caribbean District of Kiwanis. Governor Hazel is completing her official visit to clubs in Ottawa and area.

On behalf of all members of the House, I thank Kiwanians across Canada for their good work and encourage Canadians to learn more about Kiwanis in their own communities.

* * *

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was with great sadness that one of the finest political leaders in the country, in Newfoundland and Labrador, decided to resign his position as leader of the provincial New Democrats of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Jack Harris served his party, his constituency and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador with great distinction.

He was also a member of Parliament in this House from 1987 to 1988.

Mr. Harris's first thought was always for the people of his riding of Signal Hill—Quidi Vidi.

S. O. 31

During all the rough times Newfoundland and Labrador had during the downturn of the fishery and the closure of the mills, the people of Newfoundland had one voice they could go to and that was the voice of Mr. Jack Harris.

On behalf of the federal New Democrats and our leader from Toronto—Danforth, we would like to offer our sincere appreciation to Jack's wife, Ann Martin, and their three children, Amelia, John and Sarah, for sharing Mr. Harris with us and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We wish Mr. Harris the very best in the future.

* * *

FLAMES OF MEMORY

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the honour of taking part in the historic groundbreaking ceremony for Flames of Memory, the Jewish war veterans memorial in Toronto, on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, who is an honorary co-chair.

Sixty years after the end of World War II and the liberation of Auschwitz, the Jewish war veterans memorial will help to preserve the memory of Jewish war heroes for all Canadians.

When World War II began, nearly 17,000 Jewish Canadians enlisted in the armed forces, representing some three quarters of eligible Jewish men at the time, the highest per capita enlistment of any ethnic group in Canada.

In defending the causes of freedom and democracy in the fight against Nazism and fascism, they proudly carried on their rich Jewish tradition of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world.

The flames of the menorah, which symbolize the triumph of light over darkness and the victory of liberty over tyranny, will now forever honour the memory of Jewish war veterans in Canada and worldwide.

On behalf of all members, I would like to congratulate committee chairman Joel Wagman and his team for this magnificent project to preserve a sacred memory which must never be lost.

We will remember them.

* * *

[*Translation*]

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, October is Women's History Month. Inaugurated in 1992, the month offers a fine opportunity to recognize women's contribution to society. This year's theme is "Women and War: Contributions and Consequences".

Women have made major contributions to the war effort and to the peace movement. Their emancipation on the labour market was one of the results of that involvement. Women have made great strides in providing a voice for the victims of armed conflict, who are often women and children,

They have played a lead role in encouraging peaceful solutions, while defending human rights. Many women have lost a father,

husband or children to war. Many have been left to raise their families alone.

We in the Bloc Québécois are grateful to these women who have made their mark on history.

* * *

● (1415)

[*English*]

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago on the eve of Hallowe'en I was in Quebec City pacing the Plains of Abraham as Quebec narrowly rejected separation in a referendum that had an entire nation holding its breath.

Ten years ago Canada was at the brink, driven there by an inept Liberal government in Ottawa and an opportunistic separatist government in Quebec. Under the Liberals' watch, the separatists nearly succeeded, but for Canadians joining in a unity rally of unprecedented proportions in Montreal, showing Quebecers that Canadians truly cared.

Today the Liberals remain bereft of unity efforts, instead being mired in the muck of a decade of more political corruption. The Liberals' persistent plundering of taxpayers for political gain has poisoned the unity well.

Canada deserves better. Canadian unity will evolve with a new, visionary Conservative government that will stand up for Canada and demonstrate honesty, respect and equality for all.

* * *

HAPMAP

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak about an exciting and significant development announced on October 26 called HapMap.

HapMap is powerful medical research tool intended to speed the discovery of genetic contribution to common diseases like asthma, diabetes, cancer and heart disease.

[*Translation*]

I am proud to say that two Canadian researchers, working in conjunction with their foreign partners, have made a huge contribution toward making this tool available to Canadians and to the rest of the world. It will accelerate screening for the genes that cause certain diseases.

Dr. Tom Hudson, of the Genome Quebec Innovation Centre and McGill University, and Bertha Knoppers of the Université de Montréal, were the driving forces behind this remarkable scientific breakthrough.

[*English*]

It is another example of the Canadian government's commitment to investing in Canadian research. We were the first country to invest in this international consortium, with the commitment of \$50 million in April 2002.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM**

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister claimed that it was Justice Gomery who required him to have a copy of the report before the other opposition leaders. Today, Justice Gomery has written to the opposition leaders to deny this. In fact, he says that our request deserves consideration. I am willing to table that letter.

Will the Prime Minister finally do the right thing, be open and transparent and give the other leaders a copy of the report as soon as he gets a copy?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, both the government and the commission have logistical needs which must be followed. The government has always received reports of this significance in advance because it is in the unique position of having to act.

For instance, the precedent is clear. In the case of the Somalia inquiry, the government received the report three days ahead of time. In the case of the Krever inquiry on contaminated blood, the government received the report five days ahead of time. In the case of the Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, it was 20 days.

In this case, the government has given itself the shortest time period, 12 hours.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): In other words, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister intends to act like Jean Chrétien, exactly.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister wrongly stated that the decision to provide him with a copy before the other leaders was made by Justice Gomery. Today the latter has said that it is clear that the Prime Minister has a choice.

Will the Prime Minister do what must be done and put an end to all the secrecy? Will he immediately hand over a copy of the report to each opposition party leader?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with a report of this importance, governments are always given a copy first, because they have to take action.

The precedents are clear, as I have said. In the case of the Somalia inquiry, the government received the report three days ahead of time. In the case of the Krever inquiry on contaminated blood, the government received the report five days ahead of time. In the case of the Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, it was 20 days.

In this particular case, the government has given itself the shortest time period: 12 hours.

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● (1420)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made a promise to do things differently from Mr. Chrétien. But here he is, behaving the same way.

[English]

I have a supplementary on a different question. I want to return to our national embarrassment, the failure of the government to provide aboriginal Canadians with clean drinking water, despite spending \$2.5 billion in 12 years.

In an article today, Senator Grafstein tells the world that the Liberal caucus has known about the extent of this problem since 2001. When did the Prime Minister find out?

Hon. Andy Scott (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we said in the first throne speech of the government, we recognized that the situation facing aboriginal Canadians was unacceptable. We have been working at this in the first ministers meeting, the first of its kind in the history of the country to deal with these very issues, in a bold, innovative and inclusive way.

Mr. Jim Prentice (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on September 30, during question period, in words that will forever haunt him, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development described his first nation water management program as a great success.

Last week Canadians learned the truth. It is not a great success; it is a national embarrassment. Over 12 years, \$2.5 billion was spent. Seventy-five per cent of aboriginal communities are having problems with their water and 100 communities are living under boiled water advisories.

The minister cannot distinguish between great successes and great national embarrassments. Why has the Prime Minister not asked for his resignation?

Hon. Andy Scott (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the government took action in Kashechewan that would change the lives of the people of that community forever. That is evidence of our action in terms of dealing with these issues. The people of Kashechewan will not face these problems in the future.

Mr. Jim Prentice (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today Liberal Senator Jerry Grafstein confirmed that the Liberal government has been aware since at least 2001 of the extent of unsafe drinking water on aboriginal communities.

Four years later, there is still no policy in place, there are still no regulations and there are still no water standards. All we have are Liberal promises, Liberal rhetoric and a minister who is prepared with knowledge to allow the elderly and children to drink contaminated water for eight weeks.

Could the Prime Minister tell us what the problem is? Are the Liberal promises misleading or does he have a minister—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Hon. Andy Scott (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Quite the contrary, Mr. Speaker. The problem has existed in that community since 1957 and it will be solved by this government, beginning now.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at a time when oil companies are reaping record profits, the Minister of the Environment is asking Quebec, as part of the implementation of the Kyoto protocol, to pay a second time in order to help these “poor” oil companies and Alberta, which has a hard time making ends meet.

Quebec has already paid to subsidize oil development in western Canada, and now it is being asked to pay again to help that province clean up. Does the Prime Minister realize that his government's strategy will result in Quebecers paying twice, instead of once?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker, not at all. I do not know why the Bloc leader is making up this story. It does not reflect the reality at all.

Everyone will have to do their share, but Quebec will have to make less of an effort in terms of the number of tonnes. The Quebec industry will not have to reduce its emissions by as many tonnes. Out of the 45 megatonne reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, Quebec will have to contribute three. What does the member want? That Quebec only have two, or one? That Quebec not do its share for the cause? I think Quebecers want to help regarding climate change, and they will do so, within their capacity.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers agree with the National Assembly and, for once, with Minister Mulcair, who finds the federal Minister of the Environment disdainful. That is the reality, because this minister does not recognize past efforts.

Why does he not recognize the past when the time comes to acknowledge Quebec's efforts, considering that he did recognize it when the time came for Alberta to get rich? They want us to pay for Alberta's past mistakes. But they do not recognize any of the worthwhile initiatives taken by Quebec, and they claim to look after Quebec's interests. Shame on them.

● (1425)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no disdain. There may be diverging views, but there is no contempt. I do not know why the Bloc leader is resorting to personal attacks regarding such an important issue.

I want to tell him that everyone will do their share, but that everyone also benefits from the Alberta oil. Every year, it brings some \$16 billion in governments' coffers—as the Minister of Finance told me—with about half of that amount going to the federal government, which uses it so that it is of great benefit. I never heard the Bloc leader say he would turn down the equalization payment, which comes largely from Alberta, unless of course, we follow his separation plan, but that is another issue.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment recognizes that western Canada is at the heart of the greenhouse gas issue and claims that there have been improvements almost worldwide, except in Canada, because western Canada intensified production, hence the increase in emissions, to meet the growing American demand.

Having recognized that the wealthy Alberta is at the heart of the problem, how can the minister conclude that the solution is to have Quebec pay even more than it has already?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more tonnes can be obtained in areas where there is more oil, and fewer in those where there is hydroelectric power.

I fail to see the injustice in that. What is true, however, is that everyone will have to do their part. I know that Quebecers want to do theirs, because climate change is too important an issue to be regarded otherwise than as requiring a collective effort from all Canadians.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, through some erudite economic analysis, the Minister of the Environment has come to the conclusion that it would be counterproductive to have Alberta and the oil industry pay to clean up the mess, because they are so profitable to the federal treasury.

How can the minister say that Quebecers have to pay to clean up the oil industry and that, according to the federal government, that is not counterproductive for Quebec's economy?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the Bloc has been smoking. Where did it get the idea that Alberta would not be asked to contribute to the effort? Of course, it will have to make an effort. In fact, many more tonnes of greenhouse gas can be found in Alberta than in Quebec, because there is hydroelectric power in Quebec, while in Alberta, coal, oil, and natural gas are used.

I think that the Bloc would benefit from a good briefing on the issue.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the radio the Prime Minister said that trade is only possible if both parties involved keep their word.

He can keep on talking about what the Bush administration should do, but no one is listening any more except for him. He has no deadline, no plan, no help for the industry, only words, words, and more words.

Does he really think his radio infomercial has changed anything?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the NDP was listening, then perhaps he is finally starting to understand the scope of the problem.

Obviously we insist that the Americans stick to the spirit and the letter of the agreement. It is certainly our intention to take them to court because we will not back down. We have no intention of negotiating what we have won.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister wants to behave like FDR, the least he could do is provide a new deal for the lumber industry.

Oral Questions

The fact of the matter is there is no help for the industry. There is no plan. There is no deadline. There are no consequences spelled out for the Bush administration if it just continues to brush off Canada and the Prime Minister's endless words. Workers and businesses who provided the billions of dollars here are not helped by say nothing, do nothing radio ads.

When is the Prime Minister going to do something that gets respect in Washington?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been made clear in this House several times, the government is seized of this matter. My colleague, the Minister of Industry, myself, our cabinet colleagues and our caucus colleagues in particular are really concerned about this matter, as we all are. We are working very hard as we speak to develop a package that responds to the needs of the industry from coast to coast.

* * *

• (1430)

DAVID DINGWALL

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government says that David Dingwall is clean, which just shows us what passes for clean with the government. Last week's dingwash audit showed that David Dingwall charged taxpayers for personal flights, personal courier service—and the Treasury Board minister should listen to this as he seems to pretend he is interested in accountability—personal gum and even a personal massage.

Just two weeks ago the Department of Fisheries and Oceans fired employees for using tax dollars for personal use. Is paying David Dingwall severance a Liberal double standard?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I said that the hon. member devalued the currency of all members in this House by his accusations without merit and without facts. Today I will quote from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* which wrote that the Leader of the Opposition “needs to acknowledge it when his party jumped the gun by attacking the reputation of a man before the facts were in, and then acknowledge the mistake when the facts became known”.

Saskatoon is near where the hon. member lives. The message is directed at him.

* * *

CANADA POST

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, anybody who is interested post-Gomery in determining the level of sincerity of the government when it comes to cleaning things up just has to listen to that minister. When it comes to accountability, they just play dead over there.

Here is another good example. It has been 13 months and the André Ouellet possum audit still has no conclusion. Last year alone, Revenue Canada completed 307,000 audits on regular Canadian taxpayers. Why should 307,000 Canadians be held to account and not one fat cat Liberal?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear even a hint of apology in that second question, either to the attack on him by the Saskatoon newspaper or

to that old issue where he still refuses to acknowledge that he does not have the right to limit the ability of Mr. Ouellet to speak French before a House of Commons committee. It does not hurt to say one is sorry. It is never too late to say one is sorry.

* * *

TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIPS CANADA

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it took less than a month to complete the audit of David Dingwall's expenses at the Mint. However, it has been more than a year since a compliance audit of Technology Partnerships Canada was begun and there is still no final report.

The TPC audit deals with contingency fees. Mr. Dingwall openly declared that he would be receiving a contingency fee as a lobbyist, which is strictly prohibited. Why is it taking so long to complete the audit of TPC?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the TPC audit has been going on for some months. It will go on for a number of months yet to come.

These are very complex audits. Each audit involves an extensive amount of research into the paperwork and the files of individual companies.

Bioniche was dealt with by the government. We recovered all of the taxpayers' money. We will continue with our audits. We will continue to recover money. We will release the results when we are able to by law and when the work is done.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the secrecy surrounding the Dingwall case and TPC is unacceptable.

Last week the industry committee demanded that the minister release the names of the five companies that have already been identified as being in breach of contract and the amount of illegal payments made by each of these five companies, one of which was Bioniche, which we have not received from the government.

The lobbyist registrar furthermore has confirmed that he is conducting eight investigations into violations of the act, but did not disclose who was being investigated.

Will the industry minister confirm whether or not Dingwall is being investigated and is he involved in any of these other five companies that have breached their contracts?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will of course respond to the letter I received from the industry committee. We will do that as quickly as we can.

Mr. Dingwall is not a company in receipt of a TPC contribution. We are dealing with the companies with which we have contracts. We are investigating them. We will continue to investigate them. We will continue to ensure that taxpayers' money is fully recovered. We will release information as we are legally able to do so and when we have information to release.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said he would do things differently from Jean Chrétien. Today he is using precedents to justify the fact that the opposition will get the report just a few hours before they can react and that only one person from each party will see it in a lockup situation until it is tabled.

How can he explain putting the responsibility back on Justice Gomery last week when the one refusing to give the opposition as much preparation time as he has is none other than himself? Once again, the Prime Minister is blaming someone else.

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said earlier, in fact there is a long-standing tradition that governments receive these types of reports in advance of the opposition.

The Romanow report in fact was received a day before the opposition received it. The Somalia report was received three days before and the Krever report was received five days before the opposition received them.

In fact, this is a bipartisan tradition. The prior Progressive Conservative government held the Royal Commission on National Passenger Transportation report for 13 days before releasing it and the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing for eight days before releasing it.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all the precedents mentioned were under Jean Chrétien. The Prime Minister is again blaming Jean Chrétien, or somebody else, or the Conservatives. We know that the Gomery report will be quite sizeable and that it will contain several hundred pages and a great deal of information to which we will need to react quickly.

Contrary to his own promise to eliminate the democratic deficit, is the Prime Minister not in fact adding to this deficit by allowing himself 16 hours to prepare his reaction, while the opposition parties will have no time to prepare because he refuses to give them the report when he gets it?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I alluded to earlier, the fact is that there is a bipartisan tradition of Canadian governments actually receiving these reports to contemplate, to respond to these reports in advance of the opposition receiving copies.

This is in fact a historically small period of time, 12 hours before the opposition will wake up bright and early tomorrow morning to get their Wheaties and to review the report.

Beyond that, I cannot refer to any precedent of the Bloc Québécois because thank goodness, the Bloc Québécois will never be able to form a government in this country.

[Translation]

ABORIGINALS

Mr. Bernard Cleary (Louis-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is the trustee of the aboriginal people and therefore responsible for the terrible situation facing the Kashechewan first nations.

How can the federal government spend so much time and energy invading areas under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces and not find the time or the resources to attend to its own responsibilities, particularly when it has known about Kashechewan since 2003?

[English]

Hon. Andy Scott (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again quite the contrary, last Thursday we made an announcement that will change the quality of life for the people in Kashechewan forever. That is what is going to mark this government from others, in that we are taking the bold steps to change the conditions that exist in first nations. These problems have existed for a very long time and we are getting down to the job.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, CMHC has increased travel and parties across Canada and has been sitting on a surplus of over \$4 billion that it could be using to build decent housing for the most vulnerable members of our society, especially aboriginal people.

How can the minister responsible for housing condemn the first nations to living in unsanitary and degrading housing as a result of CMHC's inaction?

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to this question, the Bloc has no credibility.

[English]

In fact, I do not understand how the Bloc can on one hand say that we are not supporting through CMHC surpluses any particular housing, yet the Bloc voted against the budget that allowed for \$295 million for on reserve housing. The Bloc voted against Bill C-48 that provides \$1.6 billion, of which significant numbers will be made available for affordable housing for aboriginals, Quebeckers and Canadians.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the stripper program is yet another example that the Liberals talk a good game publicly while playing things quite differently behind the scenes. Barely a year ago the Prime Minister was under fire for the stripper program. He told Canadians that the department "is no longer doing those soundings. It is over". Yet the *Ottawa Sun* has just revealed the sordid truth: Canada's welcome mat is still rolled out for foreign strippers and lap dancers.

Why did the Prime Minister break his word?

Oral Questions

●(1440)

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as required under the law, my department provides a labour market opinion for any legal occupation in Canada. There is no blanket approval in place and since the labour market opinion was withdrawn in December 2004, HRSDC assesses requests from employers on a case by case basis.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not what the government promised. The immigration minister said, “That program has been cancelled”, “The category for exotic dancers is no longer there,” and “The program is finished”. Canadians made the mistake of believing the Liberals. Now it comes out that the government is still sanctioning the recruitment of vulnerable women, knowing full well many of them will be abused and exploited.

Why is the government complicit in the trafficking of women?

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have reviewed the procedures that are in place. We want to make sure that we have the appropriate safeguards in place when it comes to issuing labour market opinions.

Let me reiterate, there is no blanket labour market opinion in place. Those requests are reviewed on an individual case by case basis. We are required to issue a labour market opinion for any legal profession in this country.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been reported that a strain of H5 avian flu has been found in birds in Manitoba and Quebec. Further tests will confirm if it is the worrisome H5N1 strain, the deadly strain that has claimed lives in Asia.

Will the government immediately share the avian flu plan with this House and all Canadians?

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things we have committed to do is to monitor exactly what the level of avian influenza may be in wild birds. That is exactly what is taking place right now. A survey has been conducted. Some of those test results are now known and those test results were disclosed today.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once the federal government signs a vaccine contract with ID Biomedical, it will take 12 months to produce a trial avian flu vaccine. The company's special high containment facility is being paid for by taxpayers. Construction will take eight months and certification of the plant another two months. It will take a further two months to produce the vaccine.

Is the government comfortable with our vaccine production capacity not being ready until late 2006?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were the first country to have a contract in place with a firm within Canada to have the domestic vaccine capacity in place. That vaccine

will be available. Once we have the virus strain isolated, we will be able to get the vaccine flowing within five to six months. It takes time.

It is important to recognize that there is no need to cause unnecessary alarm among the public.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently in Brome—Missisquoi, with our American neighbours, we conducted an important border security exercise. At the Bloc convention, the party faithful talked, among other things, about creating an army, including spies of course, in a sovereign Quebec, but they failed to address such important and pressing issues as transportation safety, particularly with regard to public transit.

Can the Minister of Transport tell us what he thinks of the Bloc's approach?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the Bloc is not concerned with the safety of those using public transit. The leader of the Bloc can think only of creating an army for the Republic of Quebec or recruiting spies. The only thing that the leader of the Bloc did not announce on the weekend was whether, if young Quebecers failed to volunteer for this crazy scheme, there would be a draft.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

●(1445)

The Speaker: Order. Moving on to the next question, the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

* * *

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 12 years ago the Liberals promised to increase the annual immigration level to 1% of population. Given the hopes of families reunification and our economy's need for skilled workers, this promise was taken to heart by many. Year after year the government has missed the target. It will fail families, employers and immigrants again in 2005. Even with the apparent increase for next year, the new target falls far short of what was promised.

Why does the Prime Minister still refuse to keep the Liberals' 1% promise and put an end to this record of failure?

Hon. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 2004-05 departmental performance report will be tabled today. For the fifth consecutive year, we have met and exceeded our targets.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): But not their promises, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Questions

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration says that he is increasing the immigration target for next year by 10,000 people. This represents a whopping 4% increase. There is a 700,000 person backlog in the system, meaning families are waiting for loved ones and employers cannot get the skilled workers they need. There is lots of fancy talk surrounding a very minimal announcement.

How exactly does a paltry 4% increase in the target for next year get rid of the backlog, reunite families and allow for the recruitment of skilled workers?

Hon. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in April of this year the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tabled a report and some plans that would increase the number of parents and grandparents and that would improve family reunification.

Many of the targets that we set for immigration have to be agreed on with the provinces. We currently are trying to do that and move forward based on our capacity and the capacity of provinces to settle those immigrants.

* * *

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, border security is being predetermined and undermined by the Liberal government in Ottawa. The strategy is not based on intelligence or field work, but on quotas.

The government's border management plan sets artificial numerical targets for searches, overriding the goal for actually finding contraband. This padding of the numbers has been referred to by an officer as a public relations exercise. It focuses on increasing searches to boost the bonuses of managers rather than catching the crooks.

We know the Prime Minister likes phoney numbers, but why is the government jeopardizing the safety of Canadians and our border officers? Why do Liberals opt for optics over action?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish the hon. member would not believe everything he reads in the papers. He should have been with me this morning before the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, where the president of the CBSA, Alain Jolicoeur, and I responded to these allegations. Mr. Jolicoeur made it absolutely plain that the allegations as they appeared in the paper were false.

I can reassure everyone that the CBSA is a 21st century modern border service agency that is intelligence-led and driven.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take the word of the border officials over that minister and her spin doctors every time.

Along with the flawed focus of the searches, the Liberal emphasis on the border is on quotas and collection of duties rather than the actual public security. There are over a thousand ports of entry in Canada and 250 unguarded roads. Because the RCMP detachments have been closed, the union proposes sidearms and patrols. Recently agents walked off the job rather than face dangerous, armed individuals.

Why is the government risking the safety of Canadians and front line officers? How can it expect to stop dangerous terrorists and drug runners—

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, let me reassure everyone that under the Canada Labour Code, assessments are done of these alleged dangerous situations, and these assessments determined that there was no threat to the safety of border guards.

In relation to the situation around the patrol of our borders, again, as Mr. Jolicoeur and I said before the Senate committee this morning, the CBSA and the RCMP are looking at how we can enhance surveillance at our borders. I expect in the months ahead to—

● (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam.

* * *

AIRPORTS

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday in response to a question I asked about airport rents and airport taxes at Pearson Airport, the transport minister said, "It's unfair for Toronto to say they're being penalized... They should be thankful".

Here are the facts. Pearson Airport pays two-thirds of Canada's airport taxes but hosts one-third of Canada's air traffic; two-thirds of the taxes, one-third of the traffic. How in the world could the transport minister say that this is fair?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one fact is for real. The Minister of Finance and this government have given an \$8 billion break to airports in Canada. Of that \$8 billion, \$5 billion goes to the Toronto Airport. I think \$5 billion is an awful lot of money.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two-thirds of the taxes, one-third of the traffic. The minister went on to add insult to injury when he said, "If Toronto has too much business and if their rent is too high, Montreal would welcome receiving their business".

Pearson Airport is Air Canada's domestic hub. Now under the Liberals, it is the most expensive airport in the world due to high taxes. The minister's solution is to encourage air carriers to abandon Toronto and to fly to his home town.

Was the minister kidding or does he really believe this nonsense?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member has a memory problem because I also said, "if you want them to go to Vancouver", and he agreed. Obviously people in Hamilton, in London, in Moncton, everywhere in the country would like to have more business like Toronto gets. We are all happy that Toronto gets the business, but it has to pay the rent. It has a lot of business and it does great business. Everyone has to pay their rent.

* * *

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister addressed the nation for two minutes in an attempt to justify his government's actions on the softwood lumber issue and to once again speak out against the attitude of the United States. That speech made no concrete contribution whatsoever and contained nothing to help out the softwood lumber industry.

Why did the Prime Minister not take advantage of those two minutes to announce that he will be giving loan guarantees to the companies that are the victims of this crisis, as the entire industry is demanding?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have just said a few minutes ago, my colleague, the Minister of Industry, our cabinet colleagues and our caucus colleagues in particular are weighing the options and working very hard to provide assistance to this extremely important industry from coast to coast. That is what we are doing at this time.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister took two minutes to repeat what we already know. What is more, the minister has just done the same. I will take 30 seconds to tell him that his government is taking a soft stand against the Americans, has no strategy whatsoever, and the fact that things are so bad for the softwood lumber industry is their fault.

In 30 seconds, can the minister tell me whether there will be loan guarantees for the companies in need, yes or no?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is not yes or no, but maybe. We are weighing the options. The hon. member's suggestion is one option. My colleague, the Minister of Industry and myself, and the members of our caucus in particular, are considering a large number of options and hope to have some responses shortly.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have seen Kashechewan's shanties on television. According to the CMHC, 35,000 first nations families are in need of assistance.

How can one justify the CMHC accumulating a surplus of more than \$4 billion and its board treating itself to five star hotels when so many families continue to live in third world like housing? This is shameful.

[English]

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unusual that the Conservatives want me to use CMHC

surpluses, of which we are doing, to promote affordable housing. The Conservatives voted against the budget that earmarked \$295 million toward aboriginal housing. They voted against Bill C-48 which essentially was to build more and more housing on and off reserve for aboriginal people.

The Prime Minister, the first ministers and the aboriginal leaders next month will talk about a transformative program for aboriginals for both on and off reserve housing.

• (1455)

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one voted for the type of surplus we currently have or for the lavish spending we have seen.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has built a \$4 billion surplus on the backs of home buyers. It is clear that CMHC premiums are still much too high. These premiums add thousands of dollars to mortgages. The government claims that this surplus is for social housing.

Why are home buyers, who cannot afford a 25% down payment for their own home, paying for government social programs?

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know they do not have a policy, but where have they been? CMHC offers 95% mortgaging for first time home buyers. We have come up with incredible innovative programs to make it possible. Home ownership is at an all time high. We are waiving premiums for not for profit and cooperative housing. We have reduced premiums by 30% for the private sector. We are doing more and will do more.

That party does not even have a policy on housing let alone any other ideas.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last weekend, we learned that the leader of the Bloc Québécois had continued not only to play with his little toy soldiers, but also to dump on the Government of Canada.

What does the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs think of that?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc should be reminded of what René Lévesque's former secretary, the current PLQ candidate in Outremont, said about the past few years having clearly demonstrated that Quebec could very well develop within the present federal context.

This is evidenced by the 149 agreements signed with Quebec in recent years, including one on early learning and child care, signed just last Friday.

This is proof positive that Canada works.

Oral Questions

[English]

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to Conservative pressure the Liberal government finally had to expand access to compassionate care benefits. As we have said all along, the minister had discretion to make needed changes, but instead we saw months of inaction while families suffered.

One of the many Canadians who was denied compassionate care in the last days was my constituent, Sue.

Will the minister help those families who were denied compassionate care during those difficult times—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we introduced the compassionate care program last year. We are making changes to the compassionate care program that will expand the possibility of individuals who can benefit the person who is dying. We are taking a look at that.

With respect to the members question, I would be happy, if the member would contact me, to take a look at his case.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recent media reports indicate that the government was altering the deeply flawed compassionate care benefit to allow terminally ill Canadians to name a caregiver of their choice, saying “it is imminent”. However, weeks later Canadians are still waiting for an announcement regarding a timeline for these changes.

Will the minister clearly state when these changes will occur, if they will occur, and what imminent means to the minister? Could it be before an election?

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the compassionate care program is a really important program. We are going to expand the definition of who the dying person can recommend to look after him or her in his or her dying moments. We are going to take a look at it and changes should be coming very soon.

* * *

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, instead of using his radio speech yesterday to announce specific measures to help the softwood lumber industry and the workers hit by the crisis, the Prime Minister confined himself to his usual rhetoric.

How could the Prime Minister talk of softwood lumber without devoting at least 15 seconds to announce relaxation of employment insurance requirements to keep workers hit by the dispute afloat?

• (1500)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, the government is working hard on this. Even if we did not want to, the pressure from our caucus is

enormous, as it is in each region of the country. Because of this pressure from caucus, we will have a solution shortly.

* * *

[English]

SENIORS

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many Canadian seniors are not fully aware of the benefits which they are eligible to receive. There are indications that many seniors are indeed not receiving all of the payments to which they are entitled in relation to their contributions.

I would ask the minister what action he has taken to ensure that Canadian seniors are receiving the full benefits to which they are entitled.

Hon. Tony Ianno (Minister of State (Families and Caregivers), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that every senior who is eligible for GIS receives it. Of the 1.6 million seniors who receive GIS, every year 1.3 million automatically get renewed with their income tax forms. For the remaining we outreach, we advertise, we do mailings and we continue to communicate.

We care for the most vulnerable in our society. That is why we have increased the GIS by \$433 when fully implemented. I encourage all members of the House to reach out to their constituents and ensure that they all receive what is fully due to them.

* * *

ETHICS

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's tolerance for corruption knows no bounds. A former assistant deputy minister of health gets caught red-handed for fraud and corruption involving tens of millions of dollars and serves four months in jail. Now on a recommendation from the crown, the same official walks away, serving no additional jail time for a \$100,000 tax evasion conviction.

Will the government ever clean up corruption? Why is it always lobbyists over whistleblowers, patronage over merit, Liberals over Canadians?

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for giving me an opportunity to talk about all the things that we have done recently under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

The reality is the government has brought in the strongest internal audit program of any government program in the world. The reality is the government has spent the last 18 months working hard at restructuring how it provides governance, how it provides oversight, how it does its financial management. I do not think the government takes a second seat to anybody.

POINTS OF ORDER

TABLING OF LETTER FROM JUSTICE GOMERY

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period I made reference to a letter which Justice John H. Gomery wrote to me and the leaders of the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party today. I seek consent to table this letter.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on October 18, 2005 by the hon. House leader of the official opposition concerning the use during question period of the term “mislead”.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the hon. member for raising this matter as well as the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and the hon. member for Calgary Southeast for their interventions.

[English]

During question period that day, the hon. member for Calgary Centre-North posed a question to the hon. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development that concluded with the following, “Why did the minister mislead the House?” At the time, I indicated that I was dissatisfied with the use of the term in that context. I had made a similar remark when the same word was used during question period on September 27, 2005.

Following question period, the hon. opposition House leader argued that the term “mislead” had been accepted in debate on numerous occasions. He stated that the term had been judged to be unparliamentary only when qualified by words like “deliberately” or “intentionally”. The hon. member quoted three Speaker's rulings in this regard.

In his intervention, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell pointed out that citation 489 of Beauchesne's 6th Edition enumerates a number of cases where the word “mislead” has been found to be unparliamentary. He also argued that the Speaker always has the discretion to rule out of order anything that causes disorder in the House. For his part, the hon. member for Calgary Southeast stated that since the term has been accepted many times in recent years, it should have been allowed.

While I can understand the desire of hon. members for certainty and consistency when it comes to acceptable language in the House, I am afraid that it is just not possible to say that particular words or terms are always parliamentary or always unparliamentary. This is because acceptability depends not only on the words themselves, but how they are used and the reaction they provoke. I would refer all hon. members to the following passage found at page 526 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*:

In dealing with unparliamentary language, the Speaker takes into account the tone, manner and intention of the Member speaking; the person to whom the words were directed; the degree of provocation; and, most importantly, whether or not the

Speaker's Ruling

remarks created disorder in the Chamber. Thus, language deemed unparliamentary one day may not necessarily be deemed unparliamentary the following day.

• (1505)

[Translation]

It is therefore not surprising that hon. members can cite examples of the term being accepted in certain cases and not in others. The passage continues:

The codification of unparliamentary language has proven impractical as it is the context in which words or phrases are used that the Chair must consider when deciding whether or not they should be withdrawn.

[English]

I would also refer hon. members to rulings given by my predecessor, Mr. Speaker Parent, on February 17, 1997 and November 5, 1998. When arguments were raised about the acceptability of the word “mislead” and the word “misrepresent”, Mr. Speaker Parent indicated that tone, context and intention were the deciding factors when determining whether or not to rule the terms out of order.

I always try to allow hon. members as much latitude as possible in presenting their points of view, for, in my view, this House should be a place where strong arguments are presented and vigorous debate ensues. Indeed, I must confess that as the hon. House leader of the official opposition has reminded me, I have even on occasion allowed the use of the word “mislead” in certain questions, without the verb being modified in any way. However, I should also say that I have never been entirely at ease with its use in questions, though I have come to tolerate it in preambles to questions.

In the case before us, I judged that the tone of the question implied that the minister was intentionally misleading the House. I did not ask the hon. member for Calgary Centre-North to withdraw the word; I only cautioned him and all hon. members to choose their words carefully. Since the House is seeking clarification, let me say then that from now on, the Chair plans to be especially watchful about the use of the word “mislead” and I am not likely to allow it at all in direct questions.

I hope that hon. members realize that presiding over question period can be more of an art, some might say a black art, than a science. It is always the duty of the Speaker that our debates are conducted with a certain degree of civility and mutual respect in keeping with established practice in this House. The vigilance of the hon. House leader of the official opposition has been most helpful to me in considering this situation and others like it. I continue to count on his and the cooperation of all members in meeting the challenges our unique question period poses for any Speaker.

Again I thank the hon. opposition House leader for raising this matter.

Routine Proceedings

LOCATION OF PORTAGE—LISGAR RIDING

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during question period in response to a question, the revenue minister replied along the lines that he felt that some information he was putting on the record would be especially relevant to me because it came from a Saskatoon newspaper, and I believe he used words along the lines that it was very close to my riding.

Of course I love Saskatoon and the great province of Saskatchewan, but just to avoid future confusion, I want to correct the record and state clearly that my riding is in the great province of Manitoba and that I actually reside about 10 hours away from Saskatoon. To make sure that the minister does not touch down his Challenger 10 hours away from his actual destination by mistake, with the permission of the House, I would like to table a hand-drawn map of Manitoba and western Canada that he will be able to reference.

The Speaker: The hon. member would not need to table the map. He could just send it to the minister. We do have pages here who would be more than happy to deliver it for him. I would suggest he proceed by that route rather than tabling a hand-drawn map.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
*[English]***INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS**

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of a Canadian parliamentary delegation concerning its visit to the Czech Republic and Slovenia from September 19 to 23, 2005.

* * *

• (1510)

*[Translation]***2004-05 SIRC REPORT**

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 53 of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, I have the honour of tabling, in both official languages, the 2004-05 SIRC report.

[English]

It is an operational review of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

* * *

PERFORMANCE REPORTS 2004-05

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of our ongoing efforts to inform parliamentarians and Canadians on the government's performance, I have the honour to table in both official languages the 90 reports on performance for 2004-05 on behalf of the departments and agencies of government.

*[Translation]***2005 REPORT ON IMMIGRATION**

Hon. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, and on behalf of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the annual report on immigration for the year 2005.

* * *

*[English]***CERTIFICATE OF NOMINATION**

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 110(2) I am tabling a certificate of nomination with respect to the Canadian Commercial Corporation. This certificate would stand referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling, in both official languages, the government's response to 19 petitions.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on the public accounts of Canada 2005. In accordance with Standing Order 109, your committee requests a government response within 120 days.

JUSTICE, HUMAN RIGHTS, PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS

Mr. John Maloney (Welland, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a), I request an extension of 30 sitting days to consider Bill C-215, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding consecutive sentence for use of a firearm in the commission of an offence.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a) a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, November 2, 2005, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. John Maloney (Welland, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. The committee has examined the qualifications and competence of Catherine Ebbs, nominee to the position of chairman of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police External Review Committee and finds her competent to perform the duties of this position.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that you will find unanimous consent for the following motion, which I am moving in cooperation with colleagues from all the other parties. The motion reads as follows:

[English]

That this House express its deep dismay and offence at the anti-Semitic statements of the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad with respect to the state of Israel;

That statements calling for Israel's annihilation and the threats to all Muslim governments willing to recognize Israel, are unacceptable, promote violence, are racist and undermine any hopes of a peaceful settlement in the Arab-Israeli conflict;

That the House call on the Canadian government to bring our censure to the government of Iran and to the international community via the 60th session of the United Nations General Assembly;

That given Iran's failure to fully cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency and considering broad human rights violations within the country, this matter requires immediate attention from the international community.

• (1515)

[Translation]

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine have the unanimous consent of the House to move the 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)

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition on behalf of the citizens of the province of New Brunswick and others who are opposed to the construction of an LNG, liquid natural gas, terminal on the American side of Passamaquoddy Shore. They believe, as do many of us, that this would endanger our environment, our economy and our citizens unnecessarily given the fact that there have been four approved in Canada recently, all servicing the U.S. market.

We are doing more than our share and the petitioners believe that Canada should say no to the transport of those LNG tankers through Canadian waters.

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure today to present, on behalf of 51 residents in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, a petition that calls upon Parliament to change the Income Tax Act to allow spouses to pay taxes as if the total family income were earned equally.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition signed by 238 people in my riding who call upon Parliament to enact legislation to basically remove the GST on top of tax when it comes to gasoline.

FOREIGN ADOPTIONS

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you undoubtedly know by now, at every opportunity this fall I have been rising on the same issue.

These citizens of our country, mostly from Port Colborne but also from Welland, Markham and St. Catharines in Ontario, from Laval, Quebec and Victoria, British Columbia, wish to draw to the attention of the House that each year roughly 2,000 children are adopted from foreign countries and brought to Canada and yet, unlike other nations, specifically the United States of America and Great Britain, these children are not granted automatic citizenship.

Therefore the petitioners call upon Parliament to immediately enact legislation to grant automatic citizenship to minors adopted from other countries by Canadian citizens with this citizenship being immediately granted upon finalization of the adoption.

It is the last day of October and fall is marching on. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration made this commitment to these people and the citizenry of our country and I hope he will fulfill that promise as quickly as possible.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of a number of residents of New Brunswick and other parts of the country urging the government to assert its sovereign rights and declare no right of passage for liquid natural gas tankers through Head Harbour Passage. Many of these signatures are those of fishermen who are very concerned about the future of the resource in their area.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 175 could be made an order for return, the return would be tabled immediately.

Government Orders

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Question No. 175—**Mr. David Chatters:**

With regard to Nav Canada, has this organization received any funding from the government during or since its creation in 1996 and, if so, what were the full details of the funding?

(Return tabled)

* * *

• (1520)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of questions on the order paper in regard to the LNG project that we are hoping to stop in New Brunswick, which would mean the stoppage of LNG tankers through internal Canadian waters destined for U.S. LNG terminals.

Just as a reference, the parliamentary secretary's father was one of those responsible for stopping oil tankers in the early 1970s and we appreciate that. I know the parliamentary secretary is concerned about this file but I do have a number of technical questions on the order paper. His argument will be that they have not been on there a long time because the government has answered some of them, but some of the answers to these questions are critical to this file. The timing on this is very important. I hope the parliamentary secretary would address that need for speediness.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I will pass on the compliments by the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest to my father. I am sure he will be happy to receive that positive news.

I can assure the member that the government always takes the questions on the Order Paper very seriously. I understand the urgency of this matter and I will make every effort to ensure that those questions are answered, not only thoroughly, as all questions are, but in a very speedy manner.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PACIFIC GATEWAY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-68, An Act to support development of Canada's Pacific Gateway, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Raymond Chan (Minister of State (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to address

the House as we debate Bill C-68, an act to support the development of Canada's Pacific gateway.

As the member of Parliament for Richmond, I am particularly delighted to speak in favour of the bill. When we talk about a Pacific gateway initiative, there is no city better situated than Richmond. With both the Fraser Port and the Vancouver International Airport in Richmond, we are at the forefront of any large trade initiatives with Asia-Pacific. Indeed, this announcement today means more investment in Richmond, more business for Richmond and more high paying jobs for our community over the long term.

The Governments of Canada, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are collaborating on Canada's Pacific gateway strategy and building on B.C.'s strategic advantages to strengthen western economic prosperity in ways that will benefit all of Canada.

Canada's western provinces represent about 30% of Canada's geographic area, roughly 30% of Canada's population, about 30% of our labour force and a little over 32% of Canada's GDP. The west is therefore a major contributor to this country's prosperity and its future.

A 21st century economy is an economy open to the world. Canada's goods, services, capital, knowledge and people must be able to reach international markets and Canada's west coast is our door to markets located in Asia.

A fundamental shift is taking place in the global economy. With Asia occupying an increasingly central role in global commerce, it is a region vital to Canada's future prosperity. Canada's west coast, because of its location, is the ideal North American gateway for trans-Pacific commerce, trade, transportation and cultural linkages.

For a trade dependent country like Canada, it is not good enough to be among the most competitive economies in the world. We have to be among the best.

In May 2005, western premiers identified several top priorities essential to maintaining and improving the competitive position of the west and Canada in international trade markets. These priorities include transportation infrastructure, trade training and post-secondary education. The western premiers agree that British Columbia will lead the development of a comprehensive strategy that will deal with road, rail, marine ports, air and strategically placed inland container ports.

The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring Canada's west coast becomes a major opportunity gateway for trans-Pacific trade, investment and tourism.

When the Prime Minister visited China in January 2005, he noted that for Chinese businesses, the closest North American city with a deep water port and a major international airport is Vancouver, British Columbia.

Government Orders

The federal and provincial governments will continue to work together to increase the competitiveness of B.C. ports. Considerable investment has already been made. For example, the Department of Western Economic Diversification Canada is assisting container expansion in B.C. by investing in the expansion of the Ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert.

● (1525)

Improved port competitiveness is a key long term initiative that will move the gateway concept forward, creating new jobs and economic spinoffs for all of Canada. Some \$60 million in joint federal-provincial support have already been spent to establish a new container port on B.C.'s north coast at Prince Rupert, North America's closest port to Asia. Goods arriving at Prince Rupert will be able to reach the centre of the continent quicker than through ports at Seattle or Los Angeles.

Western provinces are putting together a multi-province strategy that will ensure gateway access and competitive benefits will reach much deeper into the Canadian heartland. There are already more than enough goods coming from Asia to use the ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert to full capacity. The transportation linkages that flow from the Pacific gateway provide a significant advantage for other businesses, sectors and developments across the entire economy.

Western priorities include a growing emphasis on international trade, investment, business competitiveness and tourism. The dynamic growth of the economies of China, India, South Korea and other Asia-Pacific countries represent significant opportunities for western Canadian small businesses and large companies. The Government of Canada is collaborating with the western provinces on Canada's Pacific gateway strategy to strengthen the west's cultural and business ties with Asia and to establish the region as Canada's natural Pacific gateway.

Western Economic Diversification Canada works with a broad range of public and private sector partners in western Canada to strengthen the region's competitiveness in international commerce. It promotes new investment in western Canada and supports activities designed to increase the presence of western businesses in domestic and global markets. Western provinces must continue to strengthen trade with rising economic superpowers such as India and China, especially with lingering trade disputes in the U.S. over softwood lumber exports and mad cow.

Every region of the country stands to benefit. Strengthened trade, transportation, and investment links will preserve and strengthen the country's economic prosperity, protecting a continued high quality of life for all Canadians and improving opportunities for Canadian business.

The collaborative strategy of a dynamic Canada Pacific gateway will integrate the elements of international commerce, infrastructure, transportation and border management, innovation, immigration and skills development, and Canada's multicultural connections.

Canada is as much a Pacific nation as it is an Atlantic nation. As the west becomes Canada's gateway to the Asia-Pacific, Asia will look to British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba as its gateway to North America.

Economic growth in Asia means increased demand for our products and services. Asia sees Canada as a limitless source of natural resources. Its rapidly expanding economy will need Canadian metals, minerals, grains and wood products.

Western Canada's natural resource exports to Asia have grown even faster than its imports. China's escalating purchases of our raw materials were a large part of the reason our dollar rose in recent years from 63¢ to 85¢.

Oil hungry Asian economies will provide Canadian energy producers with an attractive market alternative to the United States. From a western Canada perspective, there are tremendous opportunities for energy firms to expand trade and investment with Asia-Pacific nations.

● (1530)

Through joint ventures, direct investment, technology transfers and other means, the west can help develop Asian economies to achieve their social, economic and environmental goals and at the same time, create jobs and prosperity in Canada.

Canada's gateway strategy will promote B.C. and the west as an attractive market for Asia-Pacific trade and investment, products, services, expertise and as a tourist destination. It will also promote Canada's credentials as an Asia-Pacific nation and give us a higher level of global leadership, innovation, immigration, skills recognition and learning.

Canada's west coast, with its strategic location on the Pacific, is the ideal North American gateway for trans-Pacific commerce, trade, transportation and cultural linkages. This is an enormous competitive advantage for the entire B.C. economy now and into the future, and provides a competitive advantage for the west that benefits all of Canada.

A truly competitive Pacific transportation gateway involves a strong transportation infrastructure and more will be done as we seek to nurture and enhance this trade connection between Canada and Asia. The public and private sectors in Canada are already investing about \$2 billion in highway, rail, port and border infrastructures in B.C. to ensure that goods move more efficiently there and across western Canada.

Government Orders

There is more to our interest in Asia-Pacific than simple economics. Canada, and in particular the city of Vancouver, has deep cultural ties to the region. Vancouver offers enterprises and knowledge-driven organizations with culturally diverse employees, many of whom have strong cultural and business links to Asia.

There are close to three million Canadians of Asian origin, many of them going back several generations. In Vancouver alone, there are close to 690,000 people of Asian origin. Canadian diversity, one of our key assets, gives us unique cultural links to Asia-Pacific, as well as powerful entrepreneurial, trade, financial and industrial ties.

Today, western Canada, and British Columbia in particular, is a bridgehead to Asia-Pacific investment, trade and tourism. This major initiative of the Government of Canada combines the goal of global competitiveness with the achievement of a sustainable future for all Canadians. Building a Pacific gateway means a stronger B.C., a stronger west and a stronger Canada.

• (1535)

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recognize this member who in a former Parliament was involved as the secretary of state for Asia-Pacific. He understands that area; I acknowledge that. However, I must ask, why has it taken so long?

Why, when this Liberal government has been in power for the last 12 or 13 years, has it taken so long? Why have the Liberals only now finally got around to a half measure? I just do not understand.

Where is the emphasis on British Columbia? It is not only for the people of British Columbia; it is for the whole nation of Canada. We indeed are, as described in the member's speech, in British Columbia, the gateway to Asia-Pacific. To this point, in spite of the fact that he had a significant role, in Asia-Pacific, in representing Canada, in the Chrétien government, nothing ever happened. This Prime Minister has now finally come forward with this measure, which is a measure that our party certainly is going to support. I would not say it is too little too late, but I would say it is too little. Why has it taken so long?

Hon. Raymond Chan: Mr. Speaker, indeed, since 1994 the Liberal government has appointed me as the minister, the Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific, to develop our connection, our business opportunities, and our cultural links in the Asia-Pacific region. Before that, under the Conservative government, there was no focus on the Asia-Pacific. We were focused so much on Europe.

I visited some of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region like India, Pakistan, Malaysia, the Philippines back in 1994. I was the first federal minister who ever visited those countries in eight or ten years. It was amazing how the Conservative government ignored that region.

During that time we organized trade missions, particularly the team Canada missions, to bring our businesses to develop ties with that region. We went pretty well throughout the different regions of Asia-Pacific to build those links. As a result of that, we are bringing in many businesses, trade and other opportunities into Canada. It builds up the demand of our infrastructure in the Pacific region.

That is why the port facilities and transportation infrastructure in B.C. and other parts of western Canada are so congested now with traffic. That is why this gateway strategy is timely. We have to

ensure that in order to meet the challenge, we have to develop this strategy, open up the northern transportation corridor to allow B.C. and the west to fully develop our capacity as the gateway to the Pacific.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have lived and worked in Asia, so this is important to me. My riding is in the lower mainland of British Columbia, as he knows, so these issues are important.

As my hon. colleague has mentioned, we do not know why it has taken so long, but I suppose an election is coming, so we are a little suspicious about that.

As part of the initial announcements, the Liberals talked about funding for the Pitt River bridge, which the hon. minister has gone over many times, as have I. I am wondering if he could tell us whether there will be funding for the Golden Ears Bridge, which is also in the works.

I would also like to ask whether the Pacific gateway initiative will involve removing the somewhat arbitrary cap on commercial borrowing that the Vancouver Port Authority is facing. It has asked for years that it would be allowed to borrow according to their means and whether there is new money for dredging in the Fraser River, especially around the New Westminster Port Authority and all the way up the river. That would help the Pacific gateway as well. I wonder if the minister can make any commitments about that.

• (1540)

Hon. Raymond Chan: Mr. Speaker, this gives me the opportunity to explain a little bit on where we should go from here. After the initial infrastructure investment that we have announced in the gateway strategy announcement, there is another \$400 million we have dedicated for infrastructure to improve the transportation system in B.C. and so on.

After the announcement, we will form a council with representation from all four provinces as well as the business sector, the municipalities and other experts in the field. Any other transportation infrastructure improvement will be coming from this council.

The proposals that have been mentioned by the hon. member will be considered, like the dredging of the Fraser River and the funding for the Golden Ears Bridge. As well, in Richmond, we have the Blundell exchange, where people could easily get on and off Highway 99 as well as the tunnel going down to the Delta area. All these infrastructure programs will be considered by the council that we will form and the government would then act upon its recommendations.

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite fitting that the Minister of State for Multiculturalism just gave his speech, because he alluded to the connections that Canada has with other parts of the world through the expatriate communities within Canada.

Government Orders

I know that the Minister of State for Multiculturalism has done an extraordinary amount of work in engaging the communities here in Canada. That is why this bill is so important for him, his portfolio and the work he does with other ministers.

My question for him is a fairly simple one. What vision does the minister for multiculturalism have in regard to the importance of this bill vis-à-vis the connection we have with Canadians from many different ethnic backgrounds, particularly those who come from the Far East? What is his vision for utilizing those people who are Canadian citizens and have connections in the Far East? How does he see that role being played with respect to this bill in capitalizing on those markets?

Hon. Raymond Chan: Mr. Speaker, first I would like to acknowledge the hon. member's contribution in promoting the development of the Prince Rupert container port. The member has been instrumental in alerting the B.C. caucus as well as the B.C. ministers of the importance of the Prince Rupert port development and how not only is it going to help develop the local economies up north, it is also going to help Canada develop another channel for our exports and our economic links to Asia. I acknowledge the member for his input and his contribution to that project, which is a key part of our Pacific gateway strategy.

On the issue of the different cultural and ethnic groups in Canada, I mentioned in my presentation that over three million Canadians are of Asian descent, particularly from China. There are close to 1.3 million Canadians who are of Chinese descent and close to one million Canadians who are from South Asia. They all have tremendous knowledge of those economies. They also know how to do business in those regions and have tremendous business and cultural links to those regions.

We all appreciate that the legal jurisdictions and legal systems in those countries are not perfect for trade right now, but at the same time it depends so much on our knowledge about their culture. Sometimes in doing business in that region a handshake is better than a contract. Canadians of Asian descent could help us build tremendous business opportunities and help our businesses reach out to those economies.

* * *

● (1545)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Discussions have taken place among all parties concerning the debate scheduled for tomorrow in committee of the whole, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1. I believe you would find consent for the following motion:

That during the debate in committee of the whole on Tuesday, November 1, 2005, on Government Business No. 20, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be entertained by the Speaker, and that the duration of this debate be a maximum of five hours, not four.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): 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)

* * *

PACIFIC GATEWAY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-68, An Act to support development of Canada's Pacific Gateway, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Ted Menzies (Macleod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would like to share my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Kootenay—Columbia

I am happy to rise to discuss Bill C-68, the Pacific gateway legislation. I will be speaking in support of this legislation, but I take exception to what was said earlier about how it may be enough. I say it is actually too little and too late, but let us hope that we can salvage something out of it. We certainly do not want to stop what could be a productive move.

Across party lines, investing in Canada's trade capacity with Asia through a strong Pacific gateway should be a rallying point for us to all come together, but this legislation does not answer that call. The legislation is about delaying commitments, passing the buck while trying to take credit for simply talking about this issue.

The Pacific gateway concept has received much attention, and rightly so. Years of hard work by the British Columbia government, including the Ministry of Small Business and Economic Development and the Ministry of Transportation, as well as the BC Progress Board, a provincially nominated blue ribbon panel of experts, resulted in a comprehensive plan with detailed recommendations.

Instead of trusting the hard work and recommendations of British Columbians, the federal Liberal government has announced its own advisory council to help decide how to spend the \$400 million announced in support of the Pacific gateway initiative.

This falls well short of the priorities identified by Premier Gordon Campbell's government. The B.C. plan recommends a \$4.9 billion investment in British Columbia's transportation system over the next 10 years. The province is asking Ottawa to contribute on a fifty-fifty basis. The federal Liberals are once again late to the table and about \$2.1 billion short. Also, the real work that needs to be done was once again ignored in this Liberal plan.

Government Orders

Let me speak of a few of the recommendations that were ignored. One is the Kicking Horse Pass project. Anyone who has driven through the Kicking Horse Pass realizes what a slowdown it is for freight, especially anyone who has driven through there behind a transport truck and ends up down at about 20 to 25 kilometres an hour. The recommendation was for \$730 million to improve this corridor through the Golden and Yoho National Park area. The Liberals decided to ignore that, which is a very crucial part of moving not only people but freight through this pass.

The North Fraser Perimeter Road, at a cost of \$250 million, was another recommendation. The B.C. government wanted "to improve the competitiveness of the region's integrated intermodal freight system". This is essential. The province stated that this would be essential to expanding containerized freight in the lower mainland. There is a tremendous clustering of primary industries around there, but the federal Liberals forgot to recognize that this perimeter road is an integral part of that.

The Port Mann-Highway 1 primary east-west transportation route is another one. The recommendation was for \$1.4 billion to improve this route. This is very critical to the freight related truck traffic that goes in and out of that very highly congested area.

Another one is the South Fraser Perimeter Road, at a recommended cost of \$800 million. This also was forgotten. This was recognized as a primarily new, four-lane, high standard transportation corridor along the south shore of the Fraser River through the municipalities of Surrey and Delta.

Another is the New Westminster rail bridge, at an undetermined cost. The province has identified that this bridge, being 100 years old, is probably in need of repair. Once again, that recommendation was ignored.

• (1550)

Instead of all these real and important investments that British Columbia and Canada's exporters need, another advisory council of political patronage appointments was put in place, and probably the last thing we need is to discuss something that we all know is broken.

Canada's gateway to the Pacific does not need more bureaucracy. It needs action today.

Federal action needs to be consistent with its international trade strategy. That would be easier, of course, if there were an international trade strategy. What is the point of a gateway to nowhere?

Whether we travel by cargo ship, airplane, rail or road, the fastest way to get between two points starts with knowing where we want to go, but the federal government has not committed to a blueprint or a strategy or even a train of thought on Asia-Pacific trade in the last 12 years.

Canada has had to watch Liberals bounce from country to country, spouting the cliché of the day, trying to suck up to or aggravate the trading partner du jour. The long anticipated international policy statement was more of a rambling question on the issue of Asia.

There is passing recognition of China and India, only an acknowledgement of Japan, and then the ill-conceived selection of South Korea as Canada's entry point into Asia. This will be pursued by a free trade agreement that Canada's trade department is working on as we speak.

There are a few significant concerns in regard to the selection of South Korea. By their own admission, the Liberals have agreed that Canada's shipbuilding sector will be negatively hit.

Canada's auto industry also could be left reeling, as import controls on cheap Korean cars could bring unwelcome pressure on production and foreign investment.

So far, these seem like significant concerns for a free trade partner.

The trade potential with Japan far outweighs that of South Korea and Japan is a more complementary partner that builds on the shared commitment to democracy, human rights and free market economics.

The international policy statement described Japan as follows, "Japan remains the region's largest economy by a substantial margin, the most important investor in Asia, its financial hub, its leading industrial power, and a world leader in R&D".

Why did we not think about a free trade agreement with Japan?

Japan is Canada's second largest export market and our largest source of foreign investment from Asia. No lasting success can be achieved in China or other dynamic Asian economies without involving Japan. As a result, this Liberal Prime Minister went out and started free talks with, let us guess, South Korea.

The Conservative leader, supported by his caucus, has repeatedly presented a bold vision for Canada's future economic relationship with Japan. Securing a free market access agreement with Japan will create jobs in Canada, bring the prosperity of trade back to our communities and increase our ability to share this wealth with the world.

The absence of a strong Asia-Pacific strategy has left our trade partners to question Canada's priorities and commitments.

Japan's ambassador to Canada was recently so mystified by the Prime Minister's trade plans that he felt compelled to go public with his country's frustrations at a press club speaking event. The ambassador publicly questioned the Liberal government's priorities and expressed disappointment in the failure to expand trade between Canada and Japan.

Said the ambassador, "it's important to see things in perspective. China and India are emerging economies, yes. At the same time in terms of the relative sizes of the economy, Japan's gross domestic product is three times that of China, five times that of Canada..."

Government Orders

Once again, Liberals are hurting job creation and prosperity in Canada. We know that employment rates rise to the tune of about 11,000 new jobs for every billion dollars' worth of exports and it is shameful that export opportunities and jobs are being lost due to the Prime Minister's lack of perspective.

Despite the promise of export trade to Japan, Statistics Canada reported in May that Canadian export trade to Japan has dropped by 11.4% since the same month last year, a trend that has seen Canadian exports to Japan decline steadily since the 1990s.

• (1555)

There are a couple of points I would like to make very quickly. The government is not addressing the agriculture crisis. We have an opportunity to address one of the issues that impacts my producers, and that is a very slow system of exporting grain. We have congestion in the lower Fraser Valley. One rail line goes to Prince Rupert. The terminal in Prince Rupert works seasonally.

We think the government could have addressed some of these issues through the gateway legislation, but once again it has missed the target. We will not see improvements made to rail transportation or truck transportation that could benefit my producers.

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member understands the intent of the bill, which is to capitalize on international trade markets that have not been capitalized on as of yet.

As a government, one of our responsibilities is to maximize the economic opportunities for our citizens. Right now 85% of our trade is with the United States. It has been by and large a mutually beneficial environment in which to work, notwithstanding things such as softwood lumber. It is important for us as a government to capitalize on other international markets in order to maximize economic opportunities here at home.

As a small country of 30 million plus individuals, we have to trade in order to maintain our standard of living. We have no other luxury but to move forward, to evolve and to maximize the opportunities we have abroad.

Does the member not see that the Pacific gateway strategy will benefit his constituency and many of those of his colleagues? It will maximize our trade opportunities with Asian markets. We do not have the luxury to not capitalize on those markets. The bill and the infrastructure development and investment on behalf of Canadians would maximize those opportunities. If we do not do that, we will be left behind the eight ball and our exporters and private sector will be unable to capitalize on those markets.

Does he not see that the bill is an essential initiative on the part of our government? It would ensure that our exporters and private sector would be on a level playing field, at the very least, or preferably on the upper edge to capitalize on those markets and create jobs at home. It also would provide us with a tax base to provide moneys for such things as health care, which he no doubt cares deeply about as we all do.

• (1600)

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I only wish I had time to repeat my speech because not once during my entire speech did I ever say

that these investments were the wrong thing to do. I said they were not enough. I would like to hear the comments from the B.C. premier who put forward a far more aggressive gateway initiative. The member's government has missed the point.

When we speak of opportunities, we have failed in the last 12 years. It has only been in the last three months that the Prime Minister has spoken publicly about the fact that we should look outside our largest trading partner, the United States, for those opportunities. The hon. member suggests that I do not understand that fact. It is absolutely critical to not only grain producers in my riding. Beef producers and manufacturers of all sorts of products would benefit from having expanded trade to the Asian market. However, we need a way to get it there. That is where the government has missed the point.

We are still going to be plowing through a two lane road in the Kicking Horse Pass. When I say plowing, it is literally plowing four months of the year. The two lane road, snowplows and freight trucks do not mix. One simply has to take a drive through there in the wintertime, sit for hours on end and wait for the avalanches to be cleared. This has not been addressed in the gateway proposal. We realize we will be unable to double track CP or CN rail lines immediately. However, putting sidings in where we can increase the capacity of those rail lines would help. Those issues are not addressed in the bill.

There are a lot of failures in the legislation. I never suggested we were not doing the right thing. I am very adamant that we are not doing enough.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the chair of the B.C. caucus for the official opposition. The B.C. caucus has been seized with this the entire time we have had the opportunity to represent the good people of British Columbia. Interestingly though, this is not just a British Columbia issue. This is an issue for all of Canada, as I said previously in some questions and comments.

The fact that we cannot easily get our imports and exports flowing off of the west coast of Canada is an issue for all Canadians, as I mentioned to the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism. While in another parliament, as secretary of state for Asia-Pacific, he boasted about the fact he went to Asia. The Liberal government has been around for the last 12 or 13 years. What has it done?

I could not possibly agree more with the member who just spoke. He said "too little, too late". I can only hope that it is not too late.

Government Orders

The Government of Canada has been pushed almost mercilessly by the province of British Columbia and our caucus on this issue. On October 21 the Government of Canada announced a \$590 million Pacific gateway strategy. Let us take a look at the \$590 million strategy and what this legislation represents.

The main elements were up to \$125 million over five years in transportation infrastructure. Of the \$125 million, \$90 million is for one project alone, the Pitt River Bridge and Mary Hill interchange to replace the pair of swing bridges that are unable to handle traffic volumes during peak hours. That is \$30 million over four years. By my math, that comes down to \$7.5 million a year for the construction of a number of new road rail separations within the rail corridor from Mission/Matsqui to Deltaport and a contribution toward an environmental assessment of the proposed south Fraser perimeter road.

It costs in the neighbourhood of \$15 million per overhead railway crossing. The \$7.5 million a year would mean two more overhead rail crossings in a very busy corridor where trains are a mile and a half long, which effectively cut Langley in half and all the other places where they are at ground level crossings. The \$590 million suddenly is coming up a little short. Up to \$35 million over five years is to fund the secretariat for the new Pacific gateway council. This is another bureaucracy that we do not need.

An additional \$400 million is for future initiatives to develop and exploit the Pacific gateway, including initiatives and response to recommendations of the Pacific gateway council. Of the \$590 million, at this point only \$125 million, plus \$35 million for a total of \$160 million has been earmarked. The \$400 million will be spent at some future point in time, if we can get around to it.

In fairness this is something and it is going in the correct direction. However, to give the province of British Columbia credit and to a certain extent to the Conservative official opposition from British Columbia, it is something that is finally being announced by the government. It is amazing that it has taken so long.

Over the past two years, the British Columbia government has made numerous visits to Ottawa and two major submissions seeking Canada's commitment to a comprehensive Asia-Pacific strategy. As Canada's only Pacific province, British Columbians know first-hand that Asia looms large in Canada's future domestically as well as internationally.

•(1605)

Until recently, however, the fundamental shift taking place in the global economy was slow to register on the rest of the country and certainly slow to register here in Ottawa. With Asia occupying an increasingly central role in global commerce, it is a region vital to Canada's future prosperity. Because of the west coast's location, uniquely increasing Asian credentials is the ideal North American gateway for trans-Pacific commerce, trade, transportation and cultural links.

The projected growth in marine traffic is quite unprecedented. By 2020, Asia Pacific container traffic is projected to increase 300%. This anticipated growth is validated by today's growth experience. Pacific gateway ports handle half of Canada's maritime exports and 85% of the western provinces' marine exports from grain, coal, forest

products, petroleum and petrochemicals. Currently, this trade equals approximately \$35 billion a year in trade and contributes approximately \$4 billion annually in economic output to the Canadian economy.

What fundamentally has happened is this has occurred in spite of the federal Liberals. Shame on them because they should have been paying attention long before now. They have had 12 years. They have dragged their heels on this and only now have been dragged into this.

However, the Pacific gateway transportation system faces several challenges. Container traffic through ports in British Columbia is expected to quadruple by 2020 and has already triggered a need for more than \$1.5 billion in terminal developments in the province. The federal government had only committed to \$590 million. At this point, it has not keyed any of that \$590 million to this \$1.5 billion in terminal developments in the province.

The rapid growth in traffic is putting pressure on the port system. Shippers have serious concerns about the condition, capability and future reliability of ports, road and rail services and infrastructure. Bottlenecks already are causing some shippers to reroute traffic through the Panama Canal to east coast ports, including Canadian east coast ports. I guess there is a bit of salvation there, except for the fact that a major amount of the traffic that is currently being rerouted is being routed into Seattle, Tacoma, Long Beach, all the way down the coast. We are losing business in Canada because of the lethargy and slowness of the federal Liberals to react to this.

Our current share of west coast container traffic is about 1.8 million TEUs. A TEU is a standard 20 foot equivalent unit steel ocean shipping container or 9% of North American traffic. The rest goes to the United States. Our port strategy targets 8 million to 9 million TEUs and that is a 16% to 17% market share compared to 9% today.

In spite of the federal Liberals dragging their feet, the opportunities amazingly are still there. However, in real terms we are faced with challenges as a result, not only because of the lack of attention that the Liberals have paid in coming forward with this specific initiative but also with respect to the Minister of Transport. The Minister of Transport basically has dragged his feet on the issue of the borrowing capacity of the port of Vancouver, thereby effectively tying its hands.

As was pointed out by my colleague from Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, the critic for transportation, the port of Vancouver borrowing capacity should be limitless, that is, it should be to a business plan put together by the people on the ground who know these issues best, the Fraser River Port Authority, the dredging capacity, everything.

Government Orders

The Prime Minister has the audacity to say that he will deal with western alienation. He will pay attention to what goes on in the west. With respect to this bill, I am glad he has at least opened one eye and rolled over.

•(1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to our Conservative colleague. First of all, I want to say that the Bloc supports Bill C-68.

The gateway is an interesting concept and increased trade with Asia is not bad in and of itself. However, we must take into consideration the negative impact on workers in traditional industries. The federal government must provide better support to manufacturers in the furniture, textile and apparel industries. They are having trouble competing with their new Asian counterparts who have access to a cheap pool of labour, and this is threatening the viability of some of our companies.

My question is for my Conservative colleague. Along with Canada's Pacific gateway strategy, does he not believe that the current Liberal government should be more sensitive in order to support, assist and help our industries weakened by competition from Asia?

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Abbott: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I understand exactly what my friend from the Bloc Québécois was referring to.

I see this as being a fantastic opportunity for trade, to broaden our ability to get into the world of trade and to broaden our capacity to trade with people other than the United States which we are dependent upon for 85% of the trade as far as our economy is concerned. As a consequence, I apologize to my friend because I am not clear on exactly what it is that he was referring to.

•(1615)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a bit about trade with China and India. Before I do, though, I would like to thank the last two speakers for complimenting our Liberal colleagues in British Columbia.

As we know, before the Prime Minister became Prime Minister he talked about opening these burgeoning markets with Asia, in particular India and China which are growing so fast. Therefore we are putting our emphasis on trade to those areas.

In my riding in Yukon we have a very strong Philippine association, a very strong Chinese association and a large component from India. Our multiculturalism policy, giving them equal stature in our economy, emphasizes their potential in our economy. We therefore are excited about this initiative.

Could the member elaborate a bit on the potential trade with India and China?

Mr. Jim Abbott: Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to do that but he should not misunderstand my comments. I am critical of the Liberal members in the province of British Columbia for not being able to drive this Liberal government, first under Chrétien and now under the existing Prime Minister, to anything more than getting the Prime

Minister to kind of roll over and get one eye open, which represents this particular initiative. I am afraid he has mistaken some of my comments as being compliments for the Liberals in British Columbia.

With respect to India and China, I think trade is absolutely vital. There can be no question that they are developing economies. I am particularly interested in India. We hear an awful lot about China, and it speaks for itself, but with India being the democracy that it is, as opposed to some of the concerns that we have about some of the issues in China, we should be opening up even more in the area of India, dealing with the democracy and with people with whom we have, perhaps, more in common. It will be good for our consumers and for our business in Canada which, in turn, will be good for the people in those countries.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Newton—North Delta, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents of Newton—North Delta have been asking for a very long time for the expansion of South Fraser Perimeter Road, a tunnel to be built in North Delta. We have Fraser docks in my riding. We have a huge movement of people and goods. I had a lengthy question I wanted to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia.

Mr. Jim Abbott: Mr. Speaker, I recognize that in Newton—North Delta, in North Surrey and, indeed, all along the Fraser River we have bottleneck after bottleneck that is absolutely driving up the price of us being able to do business with the world. The truck drivers and the trucks are just being held up and absolutely jammed and it is all due to the federal Liberal inaction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): 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 Skeena—Bulkley Valley, The Environment; the hon. member for Québec, Canada Post Corporation.

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in the House today, both as an MP for North Vancouver and as the chair of the B.C. caucus for the Liberal members in British Columbia, to speak to Bill C-38 and offer our support and my support.

This important legislation may have found its inspiration in western Canada but there is little doubt that strengthening Canada's position in the competitive world of international commerce will benefit our entire country. Today I want to outline some of those benefits.

However, before we start with economic benefits, it is important to note that the Pacific gateway strategy is about positioning Canada in the rapidly evolving world of international commerce, but it is more than that. It is also about more than doing business.

Government Orders

The Pacific gateway strategy recognizes that not only products will be passing through this Canadian gateway. The gateway will also welcome the multitudes who travel to Canada each year. To put it in context, last year Canada welcomed more than 87,000 Chinese tourists, generating some \$150 million in revenue for our tourism sector. Many begin their visit in western Canada and then travel onwards throughout this great country. With new liberalized air agreements in place, it is expected that this number could triple to over 260,000 visitors in the future from China alone. Other Asian countries are also sending many visitors our way.

Canada shows the world its commitment to diversity not only in how we embrace all cultures but in how we engage and trade with all markets, ones that are both established and emerging, such as those in China, India and other Asian countries. Trade and prosperities hinge on the rapid, seamless and secure movement of people and goods. Canada is uniquely placed and our people are exceptionally skilled to provide a gateway to serve those needs in the Pacific markets.

Many have already begun to see the advantages. For example, China is currently Canada's fourth largest export market. Our exports to China have grown more than 90% between 1995 and 2004, and during the same period, Canada's imports from China grew more than 400%, making it Canada's second largest supplier. China's recent dramatic growth is expected to continue. While it is currently the world's sixth largest economy, forecasters say that it will be the second largest by 2020 and the largest by 2041.

As a result of this growth, the B.C. government predicts that by 2020, container cargo coming through British Columbia ports will increase by up to 300%, from 1.8 million containers to between five million and seven million containers. The value of this trade is projected to reach \$75 billion by 2020, up from the \$35 billion currently. This would contribute \$10.5 billion annually to the Canadian economy, including \$3.5 billion beyond B.C. The trade increases are also projected to result in 178% growth in direct jobs by 2020, from 18,000 to 50,000.

If we continue to invest together in trade, we all win. We are talking about more trade, more business and more jobs for Canadians. We are talking about prosperity for all. This strategy clearly moves us in that direction.

In terms of jobs, we know that a skilled labour force and efficient labour market are ever important ingredients in Canada's winning formula for prosperity. Through ongoing investments, and now particularly the Pacific gateway strategy, markets in the Asia-Pacific can count on our country's highly educated, skilled and innovative workforce to move goods and services quickly, efficiently and in a secure manner.

• (1620)

In terms of trade and the economy, through the Pacific gateway strategy, our country has a unique competitive advantage to be host to trade and investment that is already flowing to these vibrant and emerging markets. Through the Pacific gateway strategy, our capacity for trade will continue to grow.

However, as I said at the beginning, this initiative will not only benefit the west, by investing in Pacific trade, Canada's economy

grows and Canadians everywhere, from west to east, from north to south, stand to benefit.

An important part of the Pacific gateway strategy is that it builds upon Canada's strong record of infrastructure funding to further enhance the Canadian transportation network from west to east. Improving the transportation infrastructure by linking Canada's central and Atlantic provinces to the Asia-Pacific regions helps to reduce costs for firms involved in international trade. The reasons we should do this are clear. The central and Atlantic provinces exported close to \$9 billion of goods and services to Asia in 2004, 82% of which depended upon marine transportation and port infrastructure.

Specifically, over \$3 billion of Ontario's exports and close to \$2 billion of Quebec's exports flowed through British Columbia to other countries, with another \$50 million from the Atlantic flowing through that province as well. These provinces also imported roughly \$17 billion worth of goods from Asia.

Improving logistics and security at borders while reducing transportation time are also key to attracting foreign direct investments in and facilitating exports from all parts of Canada.

With Canada's Pacific gateway strategy, the government is not just looking at transportation infrastructure. The strategy and the legislation have been designed to allow decision makers to better address a full range of interconnected issues that impact the effectiveness of the gateway and how well we take advantage of it. Deepening our links with Asia-Pacific is a central part of this: to permit Canada to support the better positioning of Canadian businesses, products and services in China and other emerging markets.

One of the specific measures that was announced October 21, 2005, as part of Canada's Pacific gateway strategy is an initiative to improve connections between Canada and emerging markets through the increased harmonization of standards. International standards and technical regulations directly affect more than 80% of the goods traded world-wide each year, with a total estimated value of more than \$4 trillion U.S. The funding in this initiative will support Canadian participation in bilateral and multilateral standards harmonization activities and foster a greater understanding among implicated stakeholders of standards harmonization activities and developments and their impact on trade.

Government Orders

Mutually acceptable international standards, certification procedures and accreditation guidelines promote increased reciprocal market access for Asian and Canadian firms. Standards result in technology diffusion, common certification approaches and testing procedures. They also increase product interoperability, encourage innovation and reduce trade barriers. In addition, harmonizing standards increases product safety and encourages environmentally sustainable activities. This initiative will promote better access to Asian and other markets for businesses right across the country.

Of course, the Pacific gateway is not the only Canadian trade gateway. There are a limited number of other potential locations where an integrated gateway approach may be warranted by trade volumes of national significance and by transportation policy considerations.

●(1625)

In that vein, Transport Canada is developing a national strategy gateways and trade corridors policy framework that will guide future measures to tailor the gateway approach to other regions. While this framework will be based on the principles of the Pacific gateway strategy, future measures will not be identical to it. Instead they will be tailored to the circumstances and the opportunities in the regions concerned.

Canada's Pacific gateway strategy is an important part of the federal government's efforts to enhance Canada's long term prosperity. It will strengthen Canada's trade relationship as a leader in technology, manufacturing and service industries and support Canada's record as a safe and desirable country for tourists. It also represents a new policy direction for the government and builds upon other major initiatives to promote sustainable development, such as Canada's new deal for cities and communities, and will establish directions in transportation policy.

As my colleague pointed out, this strategy may be international in outlook but it is domestic at its core. Canada's Pacific gateway strategy has important advantages and benefits not only for western Canadians but also for Canadians right across the nation.

I look forward to helping implement this strategy which will bring further prosperity to all regions of Canada. I am sure everyone understands how important port activity is to my riding and to the people of greater and Lower Mainland British Columbia, not only for the movement of goods but also for the movement of people and tourists through western Canada to all of Canada.

●(1630)

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Newton—North Delta, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the characteristics of effective leadership is to demonstrate a high degree of quality vision for the country. In 1997 and 1998 my party talked about British Columbia being the gateway to the Asia-Pacific market. That was at a time when the Liberals continued to ignore the important issues on the west coast, and when the seven tigers in the Asia-Pacific market had an extremely high rate of economic growth. British Columbia being strategically placed in the North American market, particularly the port of Vancouver, had a big potential to enhance trade with those seven tigers. As a result, British Columbia could have been the engine for prosperity and economic development, and development of trade, for Canada. The Liberals ignored that plea and they missed the boat.

Now, as a result of misplaced priorities by the Liberal government in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, we have bottleneck traffic jams. The South Fraser perimeter road would have been completed by now if the Liberals had demonstrated a vision. That would have solved the problems and enhanced trade and mobility of people in that area.

The government has made announcement after announcement about the South Fraser perimeter road, which is supposed to be there sometime, but it has not done anything. The Delta Chamber of Commerce, Surrey Chamber of Commerce, people in my riding and neighbouring ridings have been demanding that road for a very long time, but we have not seen any effective action from the government, except for announcement after announcement.

Similarly, Fraser docks, which is also next to my constituency, needs to be expanded. The government has not done anything with respect to that. The government has cut the funding for dredging the South Fraser River which jeopardizes mobility in the Fraser River. It is seriously affecting Fraser River docks.

The member said that he was the B.C. caucus chair. What pleas has he made to the government and what concrete action has the government taken? I know it is too little and too late, but would he be expressing the concerns which I explained to him to his government? Will we see any action or will we simply hear more talk and announcement after announcement? As has been demonstrated in the last 12 years, the government has ignored the infrastructure needs of the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

●(1635)

Mr. Don Bell: Mr. Speaker, the interest of the Canadian Liberal government for many years has been to improve trade with the Asia-Pacific region.

In my former capacity as mayor of North Vancouver, I visited China and Malaysia. At that time I was part of delegations organized by the federal government, the team Canada delegations, and also Asia-Pacific delegations and Canada-China Business Council delegations which indicated the federal government's commitment to building trade in that area.

As an hon. colleague indicated previously, it takes time to build trade in Asia. We plant the seed, we water it and develop it. A well-known Asian approach to building business relationships is friends first, business later. It takes time to develop these connections. Those connections have been built over a number of years by the Canadian government and by the delegations led by the Prime Minister.

There has also been a commitment to improve the tourism interconnections between Asia and Canada. We make reference for example to the approved destination status that we are very close to achieving with China. This will greatly increase the number of Chinese tourists coming this way.

Government Orders

The goals are to improve trade and to improve the dialogue. It is a very complex area. There are a number of interconnected activities that have to be coordinated. The Pacific gateway strategy will bring those various components together, hopefully to work in a seamless manner and in a manner in which they will complement each other.

The Fraser River dredging, the issue of the port's operability and profitability and the requests that have come forward are all things that will ultimately be considered by this new gateway council. The council will include representatives from the major stakeholders and from the provincial government.

We acknowledge the initiatives and efforts of the provincial government in British Columbia in also wanting to improve trade with the Asia-Pacific region and to make British Columbia, the Lower Mainland and Prince Rupert truly economic gateways for all of Canada.

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this bill has a number of very specific interventions and investments in terms of where the moneys are going in order to improve trade and capitalize on the movement of goods and services. We have heard about that across party lines.

I would like my hon. friend to comment on the current investments we have made. There are half a dozen specific infrastructure investments that will come from this bill which will improve the ability of western Canada, and British Columbia specifically, to maximize the opportunities to capitalize on Asian markets. Asian markets are expanding quite dramatically.

Some members, particularly from the Bloc Québécois, have alluded to wishes that the federal government would engage in protectionist practices to safeguard Canadian companies. They suggest that erecting protectionist barriers to trade would somehow be beneficial to Canadian companies.

The Bloc Québécois members should listen to their former leader, Lucien Bouchard, who wrote a scathing piece as to the failure of certain political leaders in the Bloc Québécois and Parti Québécois to address the very important challenges that Quebec has in terms of labour movement, productivity, education and barriers to trade.

How does my hon. friend think that the investments that have been made through the bill are going to assist the movement of goods and services and trade for western Canada with respect to Asian markets?

• (1640)

Mr. Don Bell: Mr. Speaker, there are two things. First of all, some of the money would be going toward the railway grade separations in British Columbia in the Lower Mainland area to facilitate the movement of goods and services through communities and to reduce the potential bottlenecks that have existed in the past. We want to ensure that there is smooth movement of traffic.

For example, goods from Shanghai can get here something like 50 hours faster by sea than to any of the U.S. ports. We can capitalize on that advantage by also having the rail facilities and the trucking facilities to move those goods throughout Canada and indeed throughout North America to the U.S. markets faster than they could come from Seattle or Los Angeles.

Second, we are investing in the north portal in Saskatchewan. As we have said, this is not just investment in British Columbia. This is investment in infrastructure that will serve all of Canada. We are going to be seeing grade separations as well in Saskatchewan.

We have committed to the Pitt River bridge. We have committed to the South Fraser perimeter road. The question earlier from the member opposite alluded to that question.

Why is the South Fraser road important within the context of the gateway policy? Both the B.C. government and the various stakeholders have argued that this new corridor can be one of the most important elements of the Pacific gateway. They believe it will become one of the most important trade routes in the B.C. region with more than 1,000 daily truck movements.

Those kinds of investments, plus the money spent on harmonizing regulations that I referred to in my presentation and the input from the gateway council identifying new priorities we believe is a wise investment in the future for all of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to note that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

It gives me extreme pleasure to rise to speak in connection with Bill C-68. We have had the opportunity, in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, to hear a little about it during our consultations regarding a bill that has been tabled by a member of this House regarding our relations with Taiwan. The opportunity to speak this afternoon has allowed me to go into somewhat greater detail about Bill C-68.

First, as our spokesman has said, we are in favour of this bill, but we have very grave reservations about the mechanics of it. The bill also reflects a degree of naiveté on the part of the government. For example, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, who is a former Conservative—I can see that his Conservative roots have not been abandoned—accuses us of protectionism when we express interest in the jobs and industries that could be threatened by competition, fair or unfair, from countries in Southeast Asia. I am accordingly happy to find in this House people such as the members of the Bloc—for how long, unfortunately for Canadian workers, remains a question—who are concerned about these impacts. I will come back to this later.

Government Orders

The parliamentary secretary is perhaps not aware of the developing economies of Southeast Asia, their needs and the markets that they represent. For Canada, this represents a major challenge, if we are not to find ourselves at the back of the line. This is the case at present, as we have learned. This situation is getting worse, year after year, under the Liberals, particularly since the sponsorship scandal. In terms of competition and especially of productivity indicators, we are in a state of continual decline. In this connection, the Liberals cannot shift the blame onto the Bloc, the Conservative Party or the NDP, since they have been in power since 1993. They alone are responsible, because they do not take things seriously. They mistake appearances for content.

As I was saying, we are in favour of the bill in principle because we find the gateway concept interesting. In fact it should be applied to the St. Lawrence, which is a natural gateway for eastern North America as much for Quebec and Canada as for the north-eastern United States. We would like the government to make an additional effort, once it realizes that it is not just western Canada that needs this type of extremely important improvement to intermodal transportation, but that Quebec and eastern Canada need it too. This type of facility will provide a multimodal transportation infrastructure based on trade with Asia, but for Quebec and eastern Canada the focus would be on trade with Europe, the north-eastern United States and all of South America. We must not forget Africa, which, unfortunately, is forgotten far too often when we are talking about economic and social development.

We are in favour in principle. However, we have reservations about the structure chosen and the method for appointing members to the council. We found the details of the bill especially interesting in terms of the composition of the council and the nebulous mandate of this council, when we know that this agency will be channeling hundreds of millions of dollars. In our opinion, there should have been as much effort made in defining the council's mandate as in specifying the committee's membership. My colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher will have a chance to come back to that during this debate and in committee.

Another aspect completely lacking from this bill—which is no accident, but we are used to that—is any indication of the provinces' role. We know that the provinces have important responsibilities in transportation. I hope the provinces in western Canada, British Columbia in particular, will use enough pressure to make their place known. In just reading the bill we see that provincial representatives will be appointed by the federal government. This goes somewhat beyond its responsibilities. This should be left to the provinces. I hope that the hon. members from British Columbia in this House will do what it takes to ensure their province is present, and the same goes for the other provinces involved, so that they will be able to appoint their own representatives themselves.

● (1645)

As I said earlier, we are not against trade with Asia, just as we do not oppose opening our borders, because Canada and Quebec are trading nations. We are quite aware of this fact. Nor, however, are we as naive as the Liberal government and some, if not all, of its members.

I am referring to a small book I really like and which I buy every year called *L'Économie mondiale* by the Centre d'études prospectives et d'informations internationales. The 2005 edition includes a very interesting study on the long-term growth prospects of China and India. I will not read it but I want to refer to the figures provided in the study.

The paper is based on studies conducted by five different economists. It is estimated that, by 2030, average growth world-wide will be 3% per year. Obviously, I am talking about growth in real terms. For India, this represents between 4.5% and 5.5%, and for China, 5% for this entire period with, in both cases, a slight deceleration near the end. As a result, India will represent between 2.5% and 3% of global GDP and China, between 9% and 11% of global GDP.

Obviously, it will depend on exchange rates. We know that, currently, the international community is debating this. Many countries are accusing China of maintaining its currency at artificially low levels, giving itself a competitive edge it would not normally have if its currency reflected its economy's strength, in terms of growth.

Obviously, the percentages could be higher. We must not deny that, for Canada, particularly western Canada and British Columbia, the Asian market with China and India as its two motors represents an undeniable opportunity. I say a thousand bravos to this bill on the Pacific gateway.

This document indicates, moreover, that by the year 2015 or so China should rank second in the world economy after the United States. By 2030, India would overtake Japan at third. Clearly, then, in the medium term, there are some very interesting perspectives.

That said, what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Defence seems not to understand is that average per capita incomes in China and in India will remain extremely low. The issue for us is not to simply become a resource reservoir for China—as we are now becoming—and for India, to watch our jobs disappear and to have only a few mining or oil companies earning a lot of money, while some people and communities are without work and unable to manage.

It will be extremely important to have a strategy to deal with this, to benefit from the opportunities afforded us by the development of those economies but also to be aware that the consumers will not be in China or India. They will be Canadians. What is more, while our resources are going to them, if we have no strategy to ensure that some degree of Canadian and Quebec know-how, in engineering for instance, is put to use in China and India, we will end up again as the proverbial hewers of wood and drawers of water.

I cannot understand the Liberals labelling this protectionism. I personally do not consider it that. I see it as what responsible parliamentarians need to do to ensure the well-being of the people we represent, the Canadian population as much as the Quebec population.

Government Orders

If opening up markets without any concern for employment, social and community concerns is protectionism, then it is an approach I cannot accept.

I would like to clarify the statistics even further. In 2040, that is in 35 years—pretty far away still—according to this study, the per capita income in China will be one-quarter of the figure for the U.S., and in India one-tenth.

What we need then is a strategy that will enable us to be competitive in a certain number of areas in which we will be in competition with the Chinese in developing high-end good and services, and also to ensure that our businesses will be able to have markets in China. We will then not be merely exporters of natural resources and of oil.

• (1650)

We are therefore favourable to this gateway, but it is far from resolving the debate on Canada's strategy as far as economic and commercial development is concerned, both domestic and foreign. I hope that the Liberals will get it, one of these days.

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to address the concerns that the Bloc Québécois member mentioned a little while ago. He mentioned concerns about opening up our doors without respect or consideration for Canadians, their employment and social programs. That is what this is about.

This bill is about concern for Canadians. It is about concern for our jobs. It is about concern for having a tax base that will provide for social programs, health care, and an array of social programs in the member's province of Quebec, as well as every other province in Canada.

We have implemented this bill because it is about productivity, competitiveness, job creation. Canadians will have more money in their pockets, more jobs and better paying jobs than other parts of the world. It boils down to an array of solutions, including the gateway strategy, education, the removal of barriers to trade internally and externally. It is about research, productivity, strong macro and microeconomic policies. That is what this is about.

In contrast, the former leader of the member's party, Mr. Bouchard, just wrote a scathing article recently and gave a scathing speech in the province of Quebec saying to his separatist brethren that if they wanted to be a part of the international community, if they wanted to remove the torpor that has occurred in certain parts of their province as a direct result of the separatist policies of the Bloc Québécois and Parti Québécois, then they had better do a number of things, including the removal of barriers to trade and revamping archaic education policies.

These things all reside within the realm of the provincial leaders, the provincial government, the separatist government and past governments. That is where these responsibilities lie. Mr. Bouchard made it very clear that the separatist actions and policies are only a hindrance to the people of Quebec and their ability to compete, to get health care, to have more money in their pockets, and to provide for their families as individuals.

I want to ask my hon. colleague a question. What does he think about Mr. Bouchard's comments about what he and his separatist colleagues need to do to offer creative solutions to the people of his province that will enable them to have better higher paying jobs and stronger social programs?

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I share Mr. Bouchard's concern about keeping our jobs and our industries here. Perhaps there could be discussions about the ways to do so. This is a concern of Mr. Bouchard, which this government does not have, as evidenced by the remarks of the parliamentary secretary.

He told us that productivity had to be improved. Since the Liberals took office, Canada has been steadily falling behind, year after year, in terms of productivity. A report was published a few days ago. Unfortunately, I do not have it with me. Allow me to quote figures from 1985 to 1998, which I happen to have with me. In 1985, Canada ranked seventh in terms of the valued added of manufactured goods. It currently stands in 17th place. It fared even more poorly in the latest report.

This did not happen under the Conservatives, the NDP or the Bloc Québécois; it happened under the Liberals. They did nothing for research and development, even though that is the key to success. Making workers poor and jobs precarious is not the solution. The government will never succeed in competing with the Chinese in that respect. What it should do is invest in research and development, and education, and move forward. We can see the results. This is especially true for productivity. With the Liberals, Canada's ranking has been dropping steadily in terms of international competitiveness.

Let me list those countries Canada is trailing behind. There is Switzerland, a small country with consistency, interesting social policies and where people stand on their hind legs. It ranks first in terms of manufacturing. There is also Ireland, which achieved independence in 1921 and successfully developed its own model. Then comes Singapore. This is not a large country, but it developed policies and managed to cope. It is followed by Finland, Sweden, Austria, Denmark, Belgium, Holland and Norway, all countries with the same characteristics as Quebec.

Listening to the remarks coming from the other side, I am convinced that it is in the best interest of Quebecers to urgently move toward making Quebec sovereign. That is the only way out when dealing with people like the members opposite, who cannot hear the facts.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first off, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Joliette on his excellent speech. He is an economist by training. Whether the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence likes it or not, he has met his match.

I obviously lack my colleague's skill. I am not an economist by training. It is, however, true that we work well together in the Bloc Québécois. Our members are of all walks and all communities.

Government Orders

There is good reason for our supporting the gateway principle and the policy in the bill if it is for nothing other than the global view of the transportation process. Canada's economy suffers overall from a huge gap in intermodal transport between shipping and rail. There are other problems as well, such as with highways, not to mention air transportation.

I personally have some concern over gateways. The Bloc supports the concept. However, in Quebec, we had to live with the situation. I will provide a little background. Members will recall that Quebec was the international air transportation gateway of the 1960s. This is in fact why the Liberal government of the day, the Pearson government, decided to build an airport of international calibre in Quebec for Canada. That was Mirabel airport.

Following the initial idea, there came along a certain Pierre Elliott Trudeau. In his day, Quebec was no longer the international air transportation gateway. Other gateways were created, such as in Toronto and Vancouver. The principle of gateways defended by the Liberal government causes me some concern.

Obviously, it is less of an issue for Quebec, since we are talking about a gateway to the Pacific. Perfect. We must point out, however, that we support gateways, including one for the Atlantic. We hope, of course, that it will be in Quebec, because of the St. Lawrence. You cannot take our St. Lawrence away from us. You can take many things away, but you cannot move a river. We have it in Quebec.

So, we agree with the concept of gateways and all they require in terms of investment in adapting all means of transport: shipping intermodally with rail, road and air transportation. Goods and services have to reach their destinations.

I say that because we are coming up to a very critical period when stores need to be supplied with products on time for the holiday season. This time last year, several independent chains complained about the fact that some goods might not arrive on time for the holidays. We hope all these situations will be resolved by this intermodal improvement in order to ensure delivery to the retailers.

My colleague from Joliette is right. In Canada, there are an increasing number of producers or manufacturers that provide consumer services, but jobs are being lost because of this government's policies. As far as what is left of the economy, which is retail sales, if we cannot guarantee our retailers that their goods will arrive on their shelves, then I think we will have a serious problem one day.

This is worrisome to the Bloc Québécois. My colleague from Joliette and my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, indicated that the Bloc Québécois was worried about the repercussions to the traditional industries. Our workers and our economy are seriously affected, especially the textile industry, but also the other industries that are in catastrophic situations because of competition from Asia and India.

We cannot sit in this House and say we are defending the interests of our constituents and not comment on this serious situation involving our industries, including the textile industry. Every year tens of thousands of jobs are lost and go to other countries for various reasons.

● (1700)

For example, as the hon. member for Joliette mentioned earlier, China is artificially keeping the value of its currency low, while the value of our own currency is increasing. Some might say this is a good thing, but the whole processing industry must make adjustments. More specifically, business owners must be able to quickly modernize their operations to save jobs. This is always hard on workers. A member of Parliament cannot claim to protect the interests of his constituents if he does not mention the problems resulting from the international competition in areas such as the textile or manufacturing industry. We are all experiencing this situation in our ridings. We have all experienced closures and job losses in our traditional industries. We must be able to protect our interests and, indeed, recognize the need for a Pacific gateway. However, at the same time, we should be concerned about the job losses that are occurring in our ridings and that are hard blows to our fellow citizens, whom we represent here.

The Bloc Québécois is probably the only party in this House that has always been consistent and that has always risen to protect the interests of workers and citizens in our communities. We make a point of doing so. It is not difficult. It is simply about having principles, something which the Liberals have very little of, and something the Conservatives lost a long time ago. As for the NDP, it is not always true to itself: sometimes it protects the unemployed, while at other times it negotiates with the Liberal government to keep it in office. It is a political choice. By contrast, the Bloc Québécois has always been true to itself. It has always worked to protect workers' interests and will continue to do so, even as regards issues as critical as the creation of the Pacific gateway and the globalization that is represented by the Asian and Indian markets. Those who are watching us can always trust the Bloc Québécois to protect their interests.

However, we notice that the bill provides for the setting up of a structure and the establishment of a council. It is worth taking a look at the composition of this council. All its members would be appointed by the governor in council, on the recommendation of the minister. Even the members coming from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba would be appointed to hold office during pleasure by the governor in council, on the recommendation of the minister. So, these are government appointments. I do not understand why even Liberal members would get caught at this game.

Despite all the statements made by the Prime Minister on transparency and his intention to govern in a different way, the new Prime Minister, who was the Minister of Finance for a long time in the Chrétien government, is following the same old way established by former Prime Minister Chrétien. Such is the good old Liberal tradition: engage in cronyism and partisanship, and appoint friends of the Liberal Party to all sorts of boards and councils.

Government Orders

I do not understand why some Liberal members are rising in this House to defend such a thing. We know all that is going on right now, and tomorrow we will see how the Liberal Party benefited from the dirty sponsorship money. Still, Liberal members continue to rise in this House to defend a council that will be responsible for the whole Pacific gateway initiative, and whose members will be appointed by the government, namely the governor in council, on the recommendation of the minister. In other words, these are partisan appointments.

I understand why each and every poll shows that the public is skeptical about the government's ability to distance itself from the methods used in the whole sponsorship scandal. It is incapable of doing that, as it is clearly demonstrating today.

• (1705)

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to address the area of health care research in which the province of Quebec has done such a good job.

The federal government has made a significant investment in health care research across the country for the last few years. Canada has the third highest per capita spending on health care research in the entire world. That is important not only from an economic perspective but also from the perspective of Canadians' health, in particular those who suffer from cancer and an array of diseases. The investment that we have made in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research has allowed us to capitalize on basic research that has been utilized by the private sector. We are truly a world leader when it comes to our relationship with the private sector and our universities.

Does my colleague not see this gateway strategy as being an opportunity for industry in his province to capitalize on this strategy to provide lifesaving health care research initiatives not only within Canada, but to export those health care initiatives and the pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical initiatives to other parts of the world to save people internationally?

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Madam Speaker, first, it is true that medical and pharmaceutical research is being conducted in Quebec.

Some part of the industry will probably be able to take advantage of the Pacific gateway, although this is not, we hope, why the minister took this step. Health care and medication, and all they encompass, are not the most difficult issue for the entire transportation industry in Canada. I do not think that this is why the Pacific gateway is being created. However, we will use it if it is available. That is why, right from the start, the Bloc Québécois said that it was in favour of the Pacific gateway.

However, we do not have anything to learn from the Liberal government with regard to investments in health, especially since, when the system was created in 1962, the federal government paid 50% of the costs. In 1996, it lowered its contribution to 13%, and then tried to increase it to meet the recommendations in the Romanow report, for a 25% contribution. We are far from the 50-50 agreement reached by the various governments when they created

the health care system. Quebec and the other provinces have nothing to learn from the federal government about health.

As we have seen, the government's sole responsibility in health is aboriginal health care. Given what has happened recently on a reserve in northern Ontario, we have absolutely nothing to learn from this government. No province has anything to learn from the federal government about health.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating my colleagues for their contributions to the debate on Bill C-68 on developing Canada's Pacific gateway. We have seen from their expertise that, if we had a sovereign Quebec, we would at last have the skills, interest and expertise to defend our territory and better defend the interests of our people as far as the whole international trade issue is concerned.

I would also like to ask two questions of the colleague who has just finished his speech. Can he explain to me the reason for this insensitivity, lack of interest, and lack of desire to provide more support to our vulnerable industries: textile, furniture, even bicycle manufacturing, in the face of Asian competition? I stress that we are not opposed to this bill. It would, however, have been interesting to see it go hand in hand with actions from the present government to support our industries more.

Can he also tell us about his concerns that the members of the Pacific Gateway Council would be appointed by Ottawa? That could create a problem. We could end up with a council made up of Liberal Party cronies, one that would be somewhat detached from the grassroots, from what people need, as we have seen before in recent years. I would like to hear my colleague's responses to this.

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question. He has to deal with some serious problems in his riding, including those affecting the textile and bicycle industries. He has become the great defender of the latter, which has to deal with some quite simply unfair competition.

It is all very well to accuse us of protectionism, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Defence has. Trying to save jobs in our ridings is not protectionism. We are merely trying to preserve employment. Too bad the Liberal government cannot see it that way. That is my response to my colleague.

We have before us Liberal MPs, including Quebec Liberal MPs, who are incapable of getting up in this House and telling their government that it has done the wrong thing.

In response to the hon. member's final question, I will just say that this situation is not going to be solved with cronyism and appointments of friends of the party.

• (1715)

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to stand here today as a British Columbia MP to speak to this bill.

Government Orders

It is an issue that goes to the heart of the concerns of many of our constituents in British Columbia across party lines. It goes to the heart of what Canadians care about such as jobs, a strong economy, strong social programs, a level playing field and a better environment in which to live. They want leadership from the federal government to enable them to do those things. They do not want governments to interfere in areas they ought not to be. However, they also recognize that the federal government has an important role to play in ensuring that the private sector has the ability to compete internationally.

As has been said many times across party lines, we are a small country of 30 million plus people. It is large in size, small in population, but competitive internationally. It is a history and a legacy that we mean to continue. That is the root of the bill.

It does not come by pulling ideas out of the air. It does not come through somebody's fantasy. It comes through hard work, working with provinces and different levels of government. It comes through good ideas and the implementation those ideas. The bill is about that.

We have heard members from certain other parties, particularly the Bloc, express their concerns that the bill would somehow impede or endanger the ability of Canadians to compete and have jobs. On the surface, it sounds like a very reasonable concern. Canada, with its 30 million people, is competing against a country with a population of 1.2 billion, a country that has a much lower standard of living, lower wages, less consideration for their people and fewer and poorer social programs.

However, at the end of the day, we should examine the facts. We must understand history. We must understand that the alternative to what we are trying to do is protectionist policies. If we try to erect subsidies, erect barriers to trade and support the private sector through taxpayer money, that is a very poor use of taxpayer money and an unwise investment economically. In the long run it hurts the very people we want to help. It increases the unemployment rate, weakens the moneys to the purse, erodes social programs and it damages the country.

We need to look no further than the experience of many northern European countries that had a very socialist view with respect to their economic policies. What did that do? It did not increase employment. It did not improve the social programs that existed in their countries. It did not promote some kind of Nirvana where people were taken care of and they lived happily ever after in a full employment environment with strong social programs. It eroded a country's economy, damaged social programs and increased unemployment rates.

Use of the taxpayer money as a subsidy, as protectionism, does not work. What does work is to improve productivity, whether through education, lowering taxes or removing useless rules and regulations, both within countries and between countries. In short, by doing that, we produce a productivity agenda that enables the private sector to be vibrant, to be competitive and to compete internationally with other countries.

It is true that some countries do not play on a level playing field. We have seen that with respect to the United States and the softwood lumber issue. That is pure unadulterated protectionism. It is not a fair

situation. We have tried, through every legal means possible, to address that situation and to ensure that our softwood exporters can compete with the United States on a level playing field. If they were able to do that, they would continue to be as competitive and as productive as ever.

• (1720)

The member of the Bloc expressed concerns, which I think we all have in terms of our own ridings and our interest to ensure that nobody loses their job and that our private sectors are able to be competitive. We need to focus on the issues of productivity. We need to maximize those issues of productivity. We need to maximize those macro and micro economic initiatives to allow people and private sectors in our ridings to be competitive.

We also know that no economy stays static. No economy is not a creature of evolution. Any economy that is static is one that is withering on the vine. It is up to us to influence and implement solutions that will allow us to put forth initiatives and solutions to help the private sector thrive. This gateway is all about that.

It is an investment in Canadians. Even though this is a western based initiative, it is one that will clearly benefit Canadians in other parts of the country. It will improve the transportation arteries that will enable our private sector to compete.

Why are we doing this in this? It is clear that the private sector cannot do this. It cannot afford to make the very large investment into transportation arteries that will allow them to compete. That is why a federal government gets involved with provincial governments. It is not something that occurred in isolation. This occurred in consultation with the private sector, interested citizens, councils and provincial governments. It is a group effort. A reflection of that is the support that we have heard from members across the way. I think at the heart of the matter all of us recognize that this is a good idea.

Do we have to build on it? Absolutely. We have tried to add a number of other elements to this issue. We are working with the provinces. The Minister of Finance has introduced the beginnings of a productivity agenda, including the one-third, one-third, one-third initiative for surpluses over \$3 billion. That initiative is a smart and wise thing to do. One-third of the moneys will go into debt reduction, one-third will go into tax reduction and one-third will go into critical expenditures such as this. This is the kind of expenditure the private sector needs to create jobs for Canadians.

Why the tax reduction? To date we have introduced \$100 billion of tax reduction and we will continue to pursue that. We have also reduced the corporate tax from 28% to 21%. Why? Because we have to ensure that our private sector has a level playing field when it comes to taxes. Some may want to increase the taxes on the private sector. However, if we do that, we create an egress, an outflow of capital to other parts of the world. Capital will flow where capital can get the best bang for the buck.

Government Orders

We have no control over that nor should we. What we do have control over is ensuring that Canada is fertile for the private sector to create the jobs, high paying, interesting and dynamic jobs for Canadians. We also want to work with the provinces to ensure we meet the skill deficits that we and all western countries have. That is why ministers, such as the Minister of Industry, have worked with trades groups and unions to ensure we fill the critical skill deficits in the trades.

The Canadian Home Builders Association has an excellent plan to ensure that the people it needs to build homes have those skills. We recognize the changing demographics as western nations, with low birth rates. Quebec is an example of that problem, as are many others.

● (1725)

Low birth rates cause problems. Although we are not as bad off as European countries, it is something we should take into consideration. We have an aging population and if we do not address the problem we will see a contraction of the workforce and an expansion of that group of retired people who will be putting demands on our social programs. As we get older we put more demands on health care, pension and other things. We have a bit of a see-saw effect.

As that demographic progresses and the baby boomer bubble flows through, there will be an increasing demand on the public purse to provide the social programs that we have come to enjoy. We have to grapple with that but we need to do it in a fair and equitable way while ensuring that those Canadians who need those social programs, such as health care and pensions, have access to them, particularly those who are in the lower socio-economic scales, such as some seniors and people on fixed incomes. We must ensure they have the money to live comfortable lives. It is our role, in a compassionate society and with a compassionate government, to ensure that we have the structures to do that.

This gateway initiative is important because it would enable us to capitalize on foreign markets, particularly the Asia-Pacific rim which is growing by leaps and bounds. If we do not capitalize on that market, one can only imagine what could happen. Our economy would not evolve. We would be moving backward while other countries move forward. Would that be a responsible thing to do? The answer is self-evident. It would be utterly irresponsible for the Government of Canada not to engage in and implement such a proposal. As a government it would be irresponsible for us not to capitalize on those markets.

As an aside, some members have expressed concern over human rights issues. I will deal with China initially. I want to draw attention to the fact that our Prime Minister was the first Prime Minister to meet with the Dalai Lama, against the objections of the Chinese. When the President of China visited Canada this summer, our Prime Minister made it very clear to him that we found the human rights abuses by the Chinese against the Tibetan people and other abuses within China to be completely unacceptable to Canada and Canadians.

Can we change the behaviour of China in its human rights policy? No, but what we can do is engage people within China to do work differently and to behave differently. In my riding of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, we have a very dynamic university, Royal Roads

University, with a very dynamic president, Dr. Rick Skinner, who is using the university to train and teach foreign students. Many of them come from China, Japan, Korea and other Asian countries.

We are exporting Canadian educational expertise and training abilities to pupils from the Far East who are willing to pay large amounts of money to come to Canada for short periods of time to learn. What does that accomplish? It accomplishes jobs here in Canada. We are training people, not only Canadians but people from abroad. We are building ties between the Far East and Canada. I would suggest that those students who go back to China, Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are partly Canadian because they have studied for a time in Canada and they have experienced our values, our system and our way of life.

When those people go back to their countries of origin, I think they take back a part of Canada with them. They, in turn, in the work they do and in the leadership positions they implement, cannot but think that the rights, morals, activities, initiatives and values that we as Canadians extol are something that they have to impart and would wish to implement in their own countries.

● (1730)

The Canadian initiatives of working and exchanging ideas with members in China have not only economic benefits but social benefits and, I suggest, human rights and peace benefits. There is clearly a peace dividend to our countries working together on issues of common interest. For those relics, those dinosaurs in certain countries who wish to engage in appalling human rights activities, for which some continue to profit, they will have to change and evolve. For those who have studied in Canada they recognize that those kinds of abuses are unacceptable in the international community and, indeed, hurt their own countries in the long run.

What we have also done is we have married this particular initiative with a few others, including the green initiative by the Minister of the Environment and the sustainable cities initiative that we put forth. I am pleased to announce, again, with my colleagues, that British Columbia was the first province to sign on to the cities agenda which allows the municipalities to sequester and utilize federal moneys for infrastructure development, sewers in transportation arteries and other critical infrastructure. We did this because we wanted to ensure that taxpayer money would go to those particular areas and those initiatives that the private sector needs to do its jobs and for Canadians to live in healthy environments.

The moneys that we put together with respect to the cities agenda are in part going toward a greening initiative. With the announced changes that the Minister of Finance just put together, they will go very well to ensuring that the transportation changes that are occurring will be pro environment.

One of the initiatives the Minister of Finance has put together is an initiative to ensure that Canadians can access \$5,000 if they wish to insulate their homes. Why is this important? If we want to make the Kyoto protocols and, in fact, go beyond them, which is what we have to do, we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Government Orders

There are two ways of looking at how we reduce fossil fuels. One is simply to reduce the number of times we use those fossil fuels. The other side of the equation is to take that equation and insulate or make more efficient the use and the burning of those fossil fuels. One of the most efficient ways we can do that is the way in which we insulate our homes and the way in which we use energy.

For example, the insulation of our homes and buildings using existing technologies will enable us to approach or go beyond the target set in Kyoto. That is very exciting because that means we have the means today to actually meet our Kyoto requirements by using the concept of conservation and insulation. By insulating our homes and our buildings, the demand on our fossil fuels lessens which in turn reduces the amount of greenhouse emissions. That is very worthwhile.

The other aspect is the investment that will be made with respect to public transport. In my province of British Columbia, a significant investment is taking place within the public transport sector which will encourage more people to use public transport instead of their cars and thereby burn less fossil fuels and fewer greenhouse gases.

The gateway proposal will invigorate the private sector in British Columbia and enable Canada and British Columbians to capitalize on markets in the Far East. I look forward to working with all my colleagues in all parties to ensure our country continues to be on the leading edge of export development, productivity and job creation which will provide us with the moneys needed for the social programs that Canadians want and need.

• (1735)

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Madam Speaker, I heard a lot of hype from the hon. member across the way but not much of a concrete plan. I would like to address one particular point to which I would like him to respond.

I do agree with the hon. member on one thing. To try to enhance trade with areas like Asia-Pacific, countries with obvious poor human rights records, does put pressure on them to actually improve their records. On that basis I agree with him that this initiative and others that are underway with countries that have poor human rights records should be supported. Those initiatives do have economic benefits and, in that vein, this initiative is a positive step.

I know the member was extolling the virtues of the government investing in infrastructure and in its commitment. However it is clear to me that the money the government has proposed in Bill C-68 for Pacific gateway projects falls far short of what British Columbia identified as being required in order to build that national transportation vision and enhance that trade corridor being proposed by the government. The money that is put forward in the gateway announcement in the bill is just barely half of what is being called for to enhance our ports and roadways. A number of initiatives are completely left out under Bill C-68

In extolling the virtues of the government, how does the hon. member expect us to maintain a competitive advantage when the bill does not contain the backing required to make us more competitive? Maybe he could explain that to the House.

Hon. Keith Martin: Madam Speaker, the investment in the bill, above all else, must be affordable. The government will not go into

the red. It will not take our economy and the federal government expenditures into the dark old days of deficit spending. We recognize that it is irresponsible and it is destructive to the economy.

I will give my hon. colleague a few examples of what the bill would do. It would make an investment in the South Fraser Perimeter Road, the North Portal grade separation, the Pitt River Bridge-Mary Hill Interchange and the Deltaport grade separations. That is just part of this bill, but it does not end the productivity agenda.

In order to do what the hon. member suggested, which is what we want to do in terms of improving productivity, we have ensured that we have the one-third, one-third, one-third plan for surpluses beyond \$3 billion: tax reduction, which I know he will support; critical investment into needs such as this; and debt reduction.

Therefore the debt reduction, the tax reduction and critical expenditures are all part of what we are doing with productivity. We are also continually trying to remove the barriers to trade internally and externally. We also want to work with the provinces to give them the resources to ensure we are meeting the trades deficits and school deficits that we like every other western country have.

It is a comprehensive package. This is only one part of it but it has to be seen in total with the other initiatives that the government has put forward.

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the things that is important about the success of the gateway strategy will be inclusiveness and bringing together the various interconnectivity.

Perhaps the parliamentary secretary could comment on two aspects. First, since a number of advisory bodies already exist, why create another one? We are familiar with the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council, the Asia Pacific Trade Council and the Asia Pacific Foundation. Could the parliamentary secretary comment on why we should create yet another council?

Second, could he indicate what consultations have been done with the aboriginal communities? Certainly in British Columbia and across Canada we are trying regularly, whenever the opportunity exists, to include first nations in the economic success of Canada and each of the provinces so that they can build their infrastructure and be part of the growth and success that comes to Canada.

• (1740)

Hon. Keith Martin: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague has done a tremendous amount of work as a British Columbia MP to make this gateway strategy a reality.

Aboriginal communities are consulted on this. In fact, they are an integral part of the gateway strategy.

There is no other body that will do what the advisory body will do. If there had been another advisory body, we would have utilized that body, but there is no other group that has the mandate to do what the advisory body has to do in order to make this a reality.

Government Orders

There is one point I wanted to touch on and did not, and which is very important given the environment that we live in today. That is the issue of security. Part of this gateway strategy is an investment in port security. It is of concern to everybody that if we were not able to invest in the port security that is required, it would leave Canada and other countries open to threats, in particular explosive devices that could cause a significant problem.

We have not only created these arteries but we have also made an investment in the security of these arteries, which is very important. Not only will these areas be an east-west conduit but this gateway will also be a north-south conduit. Ports like Prince Rupert shave off two days with respect to the time at sea between the Far East and North America. Another important initiative we need to bear in mind with respect to the gateway strategy is it has a significant security component.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the parliamentary secretary's speech. On the form, we are in agreement. On the substance, I have not picked up anything concrete in what he said.

Earlier, he mentioned that the government would be investing in four programs. We have heard nothing about any program or any investment. He also talked about improving productivity. Basically, he rambled on for ten minutes and, when he was done, we had not learned a thing.

The same is true for questions put in the House during question period. My friend from Brome—Missisquoi says any odd thing to elicit any odd answer. We are used to it. Essentially, he goes on and on saying nothing.

We are used to not hearing or getting anything concrete. We will keep raising issues. He talked about improving productivity. How does he intend to do that in concrete terms? He said nothing about that.

I could help him in that regard. Consultations were held in Montreal concerning part III of the Canada Labour Code. Perhaps the representatives of SMEs held the solution. Perhaps the Liberals should try it out, because they get along very well with enterprises. They are very fond of them. These people suggested that the minimum wages in each province should be added up, the average calculated and a new minimum wage established accordingly. With the savings, they would be able to buy machinery and have more productive machines. Thus, their own productivity would be improved and they would be able to accomplish something.

There is, however, one thing that we must bear in mind. We are talking about industry, but we overlooked bicycle manufacturing. We touched on it earlier. This is one of the industries in my riding. Legislation was passed in Canada concerning the allowable percentage of bicycle imports. We are talking about 30%, 25% and 20%. These are protectionist measures for bicycles.

This decision has been known for six weeks already, but we have yet to hear about what the government intends to do to save these jobs in my region, which would be taken away from us and given to people in Asian countries.

What will the government do? What can it do? How will it go about saving Quebec's bicycle manufacturing industry?

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin: Madam Speaker, the bottom line is that the member is actually talking about a decision by the CITT. It was a recommendation. He should also know that we have two anti-dumping decisions against imports from China. Import tariffs on those exist right now.

In terms of the changes that the member is talking about which are further changes in terms of errors, he should know full well that the initiatives he is describing are not supported by bicycle manufacturers in Canada. Only two support his position. The vast majority of bicycle manufacturers in this country do not support the policies that the member from the Bloc Québécois is proffering.

• (1745)

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, we will now get back to being more relevant to the bill after those last comments.

I will be sharing my time with the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla. As a former treasurer of the province of Alberta, his input in the debate will be welcome and quite timely. I would also like to mention that the member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, the Conservative Party critic on transportation, has done a tremendous job on this issue and certainly carries forward issues from British Columbia to this Parliament.

Bill C-68 was the number applied to another bill in another Parliament which dealt with the gun registry, so I hope this bill will be more successful than that one was. The summary of Bill C-68 states:

This enactment provides for a declaration of the Government of Canada's Pacific Gateway strategy and, in support of that strategy, creates Canada's Pacific Gateway Council, a new advisory council that will be tasked with providing advice and analysis to maximize the effectiveness of the Pacific gateway and its contribution to Canada's prosperity.

In another part of the bill it defines that and this is the part that concerns me. It says that the council will "provide policy advice and analysis to the public and private sectors regarding the best application of public and private sector interventions".

Some people get very nervous when they hear that instead of the government listening to people in the private sector, it is going to start telling them what to do. We will see how this process goes. Two of the aspects are that subcommittees can be created, one for transportation and another one for opportunities.

For this Pacific gateway initiative to be successful those opportunities have to be developed very quickly. We need to have markets for the products that we are so blessed with in this country, our natural resources, our energy, the manufactured goods, the value added that goes on in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. This gateway will deal mostly with those products but, of course, successful trade packages with the Asia-Pacific region will be good for all of Canada. That is what we have to remember.

Government Orders

A strong economy is good for all Canadians. It is good for the environment. It has been proven in the past that most environmental initiatives start when the economy is good. All of this comes together to create the importance of having a strong ability to move product. That is my concern.

In the bill the government talks about an expenditure of up to \$590 million. The B.C. government has identified a need of \$3.5 billion in B.C. alone. This bill is talking about just a fraction of what is needed. The list of items that the British Columbia government has already identified as priority areas to move goods to the coast is very extensive. It is not only on the coast itself, it is the infrastructure, the highways, the rail lines to get the product from the interior of our country to the west coast.

I am from Alberta and we have a problem now with our rail transportation system. It is clogged for the movement of grain. There is lots of grain on the Prairies, but it is of poor quality this year. The system is clogged to the point where there is nothing moving at the moment. We have made a concerted effort. We have talked a lot in the House about finding other markets outside North America. It would be easy to just go south of the border and try to find a market. We could put a product on a truck and send it south and sell it, but we have to find other markets. That includes having more than just the ability to put a product on a truck.

Of course we can truck goods to the west coast. We can send products by rail, or by air for smaller items, but the big bulk movement of freight is in dire need of upgrading. There has been some investment by the private sector and the railroads to improve the system, but looking at the big picture it is absolutely amazing what the potential for growth is on the Prairies and in British Columbia. The little bit of improvement that has taken place is not enough to open up the bottlenecks that slow the product down.

In my area of southern Alberta people want to put together an interior container port so they can put agricultural products and manufactured products on rail cars and ship them to the coast. Right now the easiest way to do that would be to send them south and get them on the east-west system that the U.S. has. We have to be very careful of that. We need to put the investment and the effort into the Canadian system so that we can truly use our own resources and our own people to ship goods.

• (1750)

We talk about the issue of value added a lot when it comes to agricultural products, about not selling raw grain, about turning it into a product that can be shipped. In order to do all of these things, we have to have timely transportation systems. In this day and age people do not want to keep large stocks on hand. They want just in time delivery. That compounds the problem. If we cannot get the product to where it needs to be, then that sale will not happen. We have seen this. We are trying to get product into India and other areas that coincide with certain aspects of their culture, and if it does not get there on time, then it is of no use. It is absolutely critical.

When one drives off the prairies and goes through the mountains and follows along the highway and railway systems, one can see that the rail lines are absolutely running at capacity. Some changes have to be made so that they either carry double the height of product or the tracks are twinned so that traffic can move both ways. The port

can work both ways. We need it to ship our products into the world market, but we also use it to bring products in. To get products off the coast and into the interior and even into eastern Canada quickly is something that absolutely has to happen.

One of the issues that was brought forward earlier by our critic was that a lot of work has already been done, and in particular the British Columbia government has spent a lot of time and effort identifying the areas that need to be improved. What we see here today is just a fraction of what is needed. I think it is even less than 20% of the total dollar value that is needed to put the infrastructure into place to make the transportation system work to get goods to the coast which is what the government is talking about.

We are going to support this initiative because it takes a small step in the right direction, but a lot more is needed. With the system that is in place and the council that is going to be in place, hopefully there will be some more commitment from the government. For many years we have been calling for investment back into the transportation system from the money that is collected through the gas tax. It has to be dedicated to this type of thing. We know that some of this has been started already but it is all tied up with other requirements and municipalities have to be able to access the money.

I mentioned inland terminals. People in the trucking industry are facing higher costs in running a truck down the highway because of the higher fuel costs. For every mile that a truck moves it costs somebody more money because of the cost of the fuel. Usually it is the end user who pays. That would be the consumer. Consumer goods cost more.

Everything has to be made as efficient as possible. The highways have to be such that large quantities of goods move with very little interruption. A serious investment needs to be put into the rail lines. That probably is the best way to move large quantities and large tonnage of product to the coast. There is the infrastructure on the west coast for handling containers. I have even been told by people in the container industry that there will not be bulk grain shipments in the future. Even grain will have to be put into a container so that the product is traceable. People who purchase and consume it will be able to ask where the product was grown, who grew it and what methods were used.

• (1755)

A lot of change is happening. As we know, the possibilities are endless in the west, in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia, for our natural resources and our energy sector. As for the ability to produce, we are becoming a bigger player in this country.

Although this initiative is a small step, it is something that our party will be supporting when it comes to a vote.

Government Orders

Mr. Russ Powers (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I commend the hon. member for his remarks and his indication of support for the proposal for the Pacific gateway.

I come from Ontario, where we believe that the Pacific gateway will benefit us too. Because all of us in this country are the recipients of products that are shipped from coast to coast to coast, if access from the Pacific area is indeed improved substantially, the infrastructure and all the transportation linkages will improve. This gateway proposal is meant to benefit the four western provinces initially, but I am sure it will provide benefits to us in Ontario as well.

The member can realize benefits for his constituency as a result of this proposal, which he indicated is a good start. When it gets to committee there will be further suggestions. I would request that he expand upon how this proposal would affect his riding in particular. Perhaps he could provide some suggestions that could make a good idea even better.

Mr. Rick Casson: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, I have an issue brought to me by the private sector. It was a request for an inland terminal and was brought to me by some people who are trying to export out of southern Alberta. They have created a bit of an inland terminal to unload grain cars, but they want to expand it to be able to handle containers.

I think that is going to be critical as we go through the development of the agricultural industry, as I have explained. Customers are going to want to know where the product came from, not just what country. If there ever is a problem, they are going to want to know what field it came out of and how it was produced.

There is this whole issue of containers, the ability to ship and the opportunity that exists if we can open the west coast ports. Right now, products get backed up. Producers cannot get trains to haul product out there in the first place. When they do get it there, they are in a queue thousands and thousands of containers long before they can get it shipped out of the area.

There is another particular issue in my riding. We have a huge concentration of intensive livestock operations in southern Alberta. In my riding, there is a capacity for 600,000 to 700,000 head of feeder cattle. The BSE issue affected us tremendously. It hurt a lot of people. We learned a very pointed lesson as a result of that. We learned that the fact is we must have more markets. We must have a variety of markets that will take a variety of products. We had all of our eggs in one basket and that was the American market. When that border closed, we were in trouble.

There is an important aspect to this. This should be done for all aspects of our economy. We need to get out and find markets. I think the government can play a big role in finding those markets, but the private sector needs to do its part as well. If a product is needed in another part of the world, we need to find out who those people are and make the arrangements to get it there. Without a proper transportation system, we will not be able to do that.

The opportunity is there for our country. The blessings that we have been given in this great country through our natural resources and the people who create the goods can really be maximized if we

have a proper system in place, find the markets, get the transportation system in place, and then turn the private sector loose.

• (1800)

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Madam Speaker, I can tell members that long before the federal Liberal government came out with this proposal and with its legislation related to the gateway Asia-Pacific project, the official opposition, our leader and certainly members such as the member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam and others had been advocating for full support for British Columbia on this initiative.

I want to say that the infrastructure obviously is essential and I want to talk about that in a minute, but we think big on this side of the House and we have not narrowed it simply to the very important infrastructure requirements. This goes beyond the Department of Transport. This goes beyond transport policy. This includes trade policy. It includes foreign policy. It includes national defence policy.

What we are proposing embraces a far bigger project than what the federal Liberals are proposing, and as with so many of their proposals, unfortunately, they come into the game late, especially in a run-up to an election that may be coming soon and probably in the next several months. In that run-up, their habit is to make announcements on things that we have been advocating for, but always they abbreviate the announcement. They come out with a dollar figure that sounds impressive, but after the election the dollar figure dissipates.

I want to say from the start that we want to work cooperatively not just with the province of British Columbia, but for the few months that the federal Liberals are in power, we do want to work cooperatively with them. As well, something is better than nothing. We want to make that clear. We appreciate the fact that they have realized at least a measure of the importance of what is involved here.

However, to look at just how short the Liberals fall, the infrastructure requirements alone that have been laid out by the province of British Columbia are in the area of \$3.5 billion. Even a 50% infrastructure share of that from the federal government, which would be a minimal amount that should be looked for, even that amount of \$1.7 billion or so, is far in excess of what the government has committed. The government has committed approximately \$590 million over and up to the next 10 years. That is pitifully short.

Let us look at history. Members across might think I am being partisan here, but I am simply stating historical fact. If we look at history, we see how these grandiose announcements—even though this one falls short of being grandiose—play out in the ensuing years. The Liberals never come through, even with the amount that they themselves have talked about. That is our concern.

Yes, I am pleased that the federal Liberals have listened to the province of British Columbia and the opposition and are making some movement, but it is pathetically short of what it should be. If the government is talking of \$590 million over 10 years, let us say it is \$59 million a year. The government may be front-loading some of this, but let us say it is \$59 million a year.

Government Orders

The government is talking about a \$35 million price tag just for a council of people who will make the decision on what the priorities will be. That is \$35 million for people whom the government will appoint to a council and who will tell the B.C. government and the rest of Canada what the priorities are when the B.C. government has already spelled out those priorities in very clear language. The very fact of this is what we are concerned about. All of that hard work has been done. This council has a price tag of \$35 million. That is more than the cost of some of the projects themselves. It would cost \$30 million to do the Delta port rail grade separations. The \$35 million council is more than that.

We suggest that the Liberals' priorities here are to appoint people who will be of benefit to them politically and then to make announcements at politically correct times. They are missing an opportunity to grab a much larger vision. It is a vision for British Columbia, yes, but this project, as envisioned by the B.C. government, by people in British Columbia and by the official opposition, is good for B.C., good for western Canada and, in fact, good for the entire nation.

● (1805)

Looking briefly at the issue of priorities and how short the dollars fall, I will quote the proposals about British Columbia's priorities. There is very little recognition, if any, of the Kicking Horse Canyon project from the federal Liberals. These are the words from the B.C. government's proposal about the Trans-Canada Highway, "strengthening the province [of British Columbia] as Canada's gateway to the world". States the B.C. proposal, "This project is the province's number one transportation priority".

It hardly gets a look from the federal government, just a minimal glance. The B.C. priorities, with the engineers and everybody else doing the work, already have identified the North Fraser Perimeter Road at a cost of \$800 million. This is a direct quote from the B.C. government gateway proposal: "it is essential to the expansion of the containerized freight industry". It is essential, says B.C., but it is virtually ignored by the federal government.

Let us hear what the B.C. gateway proposal says about Port Mann-Highway 1 project. B.C. has already done the heavy lifting in terms of the analysis and states, "Without the Port Mann/Highway 1 project, the growth potential of the Lower Mainland ports will be compromised...resulting in significant economic loss as export traffic shifts to United States competitors".

An essential priority identified by the B.C. gateway proposal is just given a glance, fiscally and policy-wise. On the New Westminster rail bridge, the gateway report already has said that the province has identified this 100 year old bridge as a "crisis need". This is virtually ignored by the federal Liberals.

We will work with the federal Liberal government to try to broaden its horizons and help it understand the importance of the priority projects that have already been identified. We will do that. We will cooperate as far as we can, but I have to point out how short the Liberals fall and how much further we will be there. The official opposition, the Conservative Party of Canada, will be there for the B.C. government for this proposal that is a B.C., western Canada and in fact trans-Canada proposal.

There are other areas that the Liberals do not touch on. Yes, it is important to pursue trade with China. We obviously have concerns related to human rights and individual freedom issues, but it is our party and our leader that have pointed out the importance of a free trade agreement with India, with which we have a common historical and cultural background, and as well, there is the evolution of parliamentary democracy in that country.

There is so little said in the federal proposal about free trade with India, or with Japan, another robust democracy with an invigorated economy. Yes, China is important, but why is there so much focus there and so little focus on other areas like India, Japan and, as one of my colleagues talked about, the other economic tigers in that region?

That is the area of trade policy, but as well, we have heard nothing about defence policy, which goes with this overall approach. Canada has clear responsibilities in the Pacific. We have identified some \$1.7 billion in terms of increases related to national defence, Coast Guard capabilities and monitoring capabilities on the Pacific coast. The federal Liberals virtually ignore that in their gateway proposal. This is of major impact. This would have a major impact on the possibilities for shipbuilding alone, for the increased presence of our national defence capabilities on the Pacific, where they should be. This is virtually ignored by the government.

What our leader and the Conservative Party of Canada talk about in terms of the gateway proposal takes in this broad spectrum of fantastic opportunities for British Columbia, which will spread throughout western Canada and in fact all of Canada. It is a big vision and big picture approach to work closely with the B.C. government on the priorities that it has announced. It would have a long term effect and it would mean jobs, economic growth and a competitive edge for all of Canada. It would bring new hope to the rural areas of British Columbia, western Canada and other areas of Canada which would be manufacturing and then shipping through the newly enhanced corridors.

This is a proposal for B.C., western Canada and all of Canada. We are there for the province of British Columbia and the people of Canada in a big and realistic way, not with the minimized, diminished approach that the federal Liberals are talking about.

● (1810)

Mr. Gary Carr (Halton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think what the member said in terms of the grand plan and so on is something that everybody can agree with, but in this day and age, and the hon. member in a past life was a treasurer in Alberta, it is very important to target specific money. I do not mean this to be critical, but I am hopeful that when opposition parties talk about things they would like to do, as I think the member and his seatmate talked about the run-up to the election, it is incumbent upon all members to talk about specifically what that would be.

Government Orders

I know the hon. member's responsibility has shifted into the trade area, but I think people need to know specifically, when he talks about helping B.C., what that will mean in terms of a dollar figure. If I could be so bold, and I know the member is not the critic but he is well versed in this area, what will that mean specifically in terms of the investment it would take to get to this so-called grand plan that he talked about?

Mr. Stockwell Day: Madam Speaker, first of all, the B.C. government has identified up to \$3.5 billion, and a 50% share would be \$1.7 billion and some. The amount that we have advocated for some period of time, the 5¢ per litre going back to the provincial government from the gas tax, has been a recommendation of ours for about three years.

People ask if I enjoy being in opposition and I say that yes, there are little moments of joy, but it is frustrating. The few moments of joy are when the federal government sees our good ideas and seizes them with its hands, grabs them and claims them for its own. In the process Canadians somewhere are benefited by our ideas, so we were pleased to see again a small step forward on the part of the federal government toward our proposal in terms of giving some of those gas tax dollars back to the provinces from whence they came.

That would be the first area of draw which would exceed, with great capacity, the amount that has been projected over 10 years by the federal Liberals of \$590 million. It would be in excess of that, so not only will we be in excess of the proposed \$590 million over 10 years but we have also gone further.

We have identified areas of significant waste within government, helped by the Auditor General. The last figure, before election time, that we put out to independent auditors was some \$6 billion in poorly managed or wasteful areas, identified by the Auditor General, not by ourselves. Obviously, B.C. would not be able to claim that entire \$6 billion, but a portion from that would go to the enhanced infrastructure needs.

The final area would be related to the tax invigoration that comes when taxes are lowered, especially on small and medium sized business, on other business and on hard working people. When those taxes are lowered, the economy is reinvigorated and more revenue is brought in, which that side of the House has not contemplated, and from that share of increased revenue, some portion of that would also go to these infrastructure projects.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, this government is opening the market to unbridled imports from countries that, in most cases, provide unfair competition to Canadian companies. I want to point out that to date this unfair competition has been mostly harming companies in Quebec, which are closing one by one, despite the call for federal aid to protect them.

These businesses can compete unfairly in that, in most cases, they do not respect human rights. Canadian and Quebec companies that are not very respectful of those around them and that are only interested in themselves are offered a chance to set up their production in those countries and then sell us their products. We are not against opening a road to ensure development for the western

provinces that, in the meantime, would help them become aware of the unfair competition these countries have over these provinces. Perhaps the western provinces would then become more aware of Quebec's demands. We hope so.

I want to know whether the hon. member thinks it would not be beneficial for the current government to create trade policies that would protect the Canadian and Quebec economy before these new roads are opened.

[*English*]

Mr. Stockwell Day: Madam Speaker, I would ask the member, in reply to his very good question, to carefully read the words of former Quebec premier, Mr. Bouchard, who recently talked about the fact that a country that is overly protectionist, overly taxed and overly regulated stifles innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. The people of Quebec are remarkable for their entrepreneurial spirit. They have proven time and time again how innovative they can be. They have proven that they can compete with the best in the world, but past policies within the province of Quebec have in fact created an uncompetitive atmosphere.

The proposals that we are talking about in the gateway legislation have to do first with the west coast, but the benefits come all the way across Canada. I would want to work closely with our colleagues in Quebec to do what can be done to dismantle the heavy federal burden of the over-regulatory regime, over-taxation, and the unnecessary continued federal involvement in areas of provincial jurisdiction, which puts a weight on the people and the industry in Quebec and makes them less competitive.

We want to see the people of Quebec absolutely removed of these unnecessary burdens, so they can be free to compete and succeed with the best in the world, as they have proven they can do.

Mr. Gary Carr (Halton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-68. I will talk a bit about the Canadian Pacific gateway council.

Canada, as has been mentioned by a lot of members in this House, is probably one of the most trade dependent nations in all the G-7 countries. Much of the prosperity depends upon trade. We all know that in the neighbourhood of 86% of our trade is presently with the United States.

However, the Government of Canada has long recognized that the Pacific gateway is strategically positioned as a gateway to North America. Not only the Prime Minister but all members in this House from all political parties realize that the trade that will be coming in place with China and our friends in India as well is very critical. They are known as the emerging Asian tigers.

I think there is agreement here that we need to, on all parts, diversify our trade. We have been blessed being right next door to the largest market, the United States, but there can be downturns for whatever reason. There have been economic downturns, historically, in the patterns of the economy. We need to ensure that we diversify into some of these emerging markets.

Government Orders

The fact that we probably have right now the largest number of people coming from China and India to Canada gives us a real leg up in that area. I am pleased that Bill C-68 will take a look at the Pacific gateway and ensure that we have the infrastructure in place.

I agree with my hon. friends that we need to look at some of the work that the B.C. government has done in taking a look at this issue. As has been mentioned, and I know friends from the Bloc Québécois feel the same way, the provinces have a very strong say in what happens in their trade policies. That is one of the reasons why Canada, in the past, has gone on trade missions and invited the premiers from all of the provinces to attend. We are fairly decentralized in terms of our federation and the provinces do need to have a say in exactly what is happening.

I am pleased that we are listening to our friends in B.C. and the B.C. government, and what they are looking at doing in expanding in that area. I know the previous speaker talked about that a little bit and was actually very helpful, in terms of understanding what the B.C. government is doing. That is one of the reasons these debates are helpful. My good friend to the left here who spoke a little bit earlier and my friend from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca talked about some of the things happening in that area. So, I am particularly pleased that the government will attempt to look at these emerging markets, particularly with our friends in China.

The Government of Canada is fully developing the Pacific gateway. To do this most effectively, many interconnected issues need to be addressed. I think that is paramount. It is not just one solution. There need to be some interconnected issues, not only transportation infrastructure but building deeper links with Asia-Pacific and, as well, maintaining secure and efficient borders and labour market pressures. While we talk about some of the infrastructure, and particularly in this case the transportation infrastructure issues, there are also other issues.

Federal policies and investments in this area have achieved real results for Canada. However, we cannot rest on our laurels. We need to continue to have greater focus on the need of connecting them in the gateway context. These interconnections reach beyond transportation, and so must the consensus building. That is why I believe that the advisory process of future decisions is so very important.

We must recognize, as a federal government, that we do not have all of the answers to the solutions and that we need to look at the advisory process and get some good advice in the other areas.

I am glad members on all sides have talked about some of the things that the B.C. government is doing by sharing those ideas and repeating them in the House. Having them reinforced with the various ministers can only help in achieving our goal of helping everybody who is affected by this.

• (1820)

There are some who would say that it affects just one area of the country. I do not believe it does. Our trade affects all the country. When we do one thing that is good for a particular area, it benefits all of us in the spin-off jobs that come as a direct result of it.

Canada's Pacific Gateway council would be created through the legislation to advise on the decision making process on a full range of transportation and other issues. I am glad to see it in the

legislation. I know governments of all political stripes attempt to consult, but I like the fact that the legislation deals with transportation and other impacts affecting Canada's great Pacific gateway.

The council would provide a dedicated forum for examining these interconnected issues in an integrated way. It is important, when we are having the debates and discussions, that they be in an integrated way. There is no sense moving ahead on one front if it needs to happen on perhaps one, two, three or four other fronts as well. By having the advisory process, it will help to ensure and to reinforce the things that need to happen and get a consensus on the priorities.

I think all members would agree that sometimes priorities have to be made not only in this area, but also in areas of health care, education and the spending. If we can build a consensus on the priorities, it will make it much easier for the government to make the decisions. Far too often in the political process we do not build the consensus on the priorities. We sometimes seem to manage from day to day. By doing the long range process, we can build a consensus on priorities and that can provide the advice to the government.

I know opposition members will say that the government does not listen in respects. I think on most occasions the government attempts to listen when there is a broad consensus on what it should do. Having been involved, I know the government attempts to look at all the good ideas coming forward from all members.

If we can set the priorities, if we can get a consensus on priorities, if we can stop some of the partisanship that happens as a result of this, then I think it will be helpful to the government. We probably could do that in building the consensus on the priorities.

The council would have a mandate to advise the decision makers on the full range of issues that impact on the effectiveness of the Pacific gateway and how well the Canadian economy can capitalize on those opportunities. It is not just setting up the infrastructure. We need to ensure that Canadian businesses across the country, small, medium and large, are able to capitalize on that.

We have been blessed in many respects. We have a lot of natural resources, wood, oil and minerals. However, our single biggest factor in making us successful is not the physical attributes with which we have been blessed. It also is the fact that we have the greatest people in the world. It is those people in the small, medium and large businesses who will capitalize on these opportunities.

Where they need help from the government is in the infrastructure. That is where we as parliamentarians can assist them. I have every confidence in the world that if the government can do the right thing in helping with the infrastructure and with some of the things we have talked about, then our small, medium and large business will be able to compete in this new marketplace.

Adjournment Proceedings

It would be fair to say that they also need government assistance for the infrastructure. This is where I believe the government can take a very strong role. It is one of the reasons the Prime Minister and our party in the last election called for an increase in the infrastructure for municipalities. We believe we have a role to play.

I know some people on all sides who disagree with that. They have told the government to stay out of the jurisdiction of municipalities. In the vast majority of the cases, municipalities, certainly in my area and I think in all areas, welcome the infrastructure investment.

The council would consist of governor in council appointments with expertise in a number of areas. Those areas will be a cross-section. They include transportation, which we have talked about a great deal here today. They include international trade, which is extremely important. We need to ensure that we have the discussions on international trade. They also include labour, which also is extremely important.

• (1825)

As I said earlier, our people give us the great strength. The labour issues need to be addressed and talked about with the various labour unions. They are the producers of the great products that we are then able to ship out. Again, we have the best workers in the world, bar none, in virtually every industry.

The people in the area where I come from produce cars faster, better and cheaper than anywhere else in the world. It is not because of the infrastructure. It is because of the people. When I say that, I mean the Canadian concept. I know my friends, particularly from the Bloc, may not sometimes think of that. Canadians across the country compete with the Americans. There are producers not only in Ontario, but in Quebec. I say this for the aircraft manufacturing as well. We produce products faster, better and cheaper than anywhere else in the world with the great expertise of our people.

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The member will have eight minutes and 36 seconds remaining in debate.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I hope the government finally has a response to a point I raised on the government's record on the environment. When I raised the David Suzuki report with the environment minister, which placed Canada near the bottom of the pile yet again with the OECD, the response by the minister was quite remarkable. He said that I could not list one promise that he had not kept since he had been in office.

The whole time of this current Parliament, there have been two bills on the environment, one old bill moving Parks Canada and another bill on shipping, which has received a lot of controversy. That is it.

We have a Kyoto plan with no targets applied to it. We have had no emission requirements in an auto plan. All of it is voluntary and all of it falling in the wake of the progressive moves on the part of the government of California.

In terms the government keeping its promises, so few promises have been made when it comes to the environment. No wonder the minister can stand up and say what he did with a straight face.

Next we have COP 11. I hope the parliamentary secretary is able to address some serious concerns that the Government of Canada should have as it approaches COP 11 in Montreal. This is a meeting of the parties that have signed on to Kyoto. The world is coming together to watch Canada potentially embarrass itself. While the government likes to chastize George Bush at every opportunity, on this particular front the embarrassment of our record when it comes to the environment is second to none.

One would hope the government will first apologize and humbly seek the world's forgiveness for having made so many commitments. I am sure the parliamentary secretary will clarify this. As the Auditor General has said, the government has a particular affection for making announcements, but is usually out the door before the confetti hits the ground and does not follow through on those announcements and commitments.

How can we stand with any credibility on the world stage, calling upon other governments to get serious about things as important as climate change? Across the board, the industrial sector and on has said that this is one of the most important, if not the most important pressing issue for world security, for our environment and for our economy. We would hope the government will not be laughed out of the place. This would be rather embarrassing because Montreal is the environment minister's hometown. I am not sure where he would go, potentially back to Ottawa.

Water has been a critical issue in this House. I hope the parliamentary secretary will also address this, although I am getting suspicious now that I see prepared notes.

With respect to not having a national standard for water quality, this weekend the Minister of Health, somehow with some credibility, lamented in the British Columbia press that there was no national standard for water quality, that it was a travesty and that it was impossible to believe. It was as if someone else were in charge, as if someone else had held the pen on all this for the last dozen years or so, looking potentially to shift the blame. Perhaps the minister has forgotten he is no longer in opposition in the midst of a credible party, but now sits in government in a party that has no credibility on water issues.

The pivot of the question is focused around the government's ability to stand up with any sense of credibility on an issue like the environment. The environment minister's answer was vague and unpromising as always. I hope the parliamentary secretary will deviate from those well prepared notes and answer some of the concerns that we raise.

Adjournment Proceedings

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not have to depart from my notes because they cover all the items the member mentioned and even more that he is obviously not aware of because he is not celebrating Canada's environmental record.

I welcome the 2005 report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. The report clearly reminds us that the job of ensuring that Canadians, today and in the future, will enjoy a safe and healthy environment and a sound and prosperous economy is an ongoing one and one that requires cooperative efforts internationally by all levels of government, all sectors of the economy and individual Canadians.

I would like to assure the hon. member and the commissioner that the government is listening and taking action.

The recent passage of Bill C-15, an act to amend the Migratory Birds Convention Act and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, substantially enhances Canada's ability to deal with oil deposits into the marine environment by extending its enforcement regime to the outward edge of the exclusive economic zone. In fact, the Minister of the Environment was recognized by IFAW just last week for his invaluable work on this important file. I was at the awards ceremony and it was heartwarming to see Canada's Minister of the Environment being recognized by such an important environmental organization.

We are also taking action with regard to protecting the ecological integrity of Canada's national parks, as the member mentioned. Through the budget 2005 allocation of \$269 million in additional funds, we are preserving not only ecological integrity and Canada's magnificent heritage, but an essential source of revenue for Canada's tourism industry, for many communities and for Canada's aboriginal people.

The Government of Canada's agenda for water includes a five year water management strategy, with investments of \$600 million to improve water and waste water services for first nation reserve communities and \$28 million is devoted to the first phase of the government's oceans and action plan.

I will depart from my notes just to react to something the member said. It is not in my notes because I do not think anyone would have believed he would be suggesting that we take away responsibilities from the provinces and municipalities.

We have an \$85 million strategy to combat the proliferation of invasive exotic species. We are moving ahead with a 10 year clean air agenda, including addressing transboundary pollution, emissions in the transportation sector and from major industrial sources, and advancing the science on these issues. One of its key elements is a strict regulatory action plan for vehicles, engines and fuels which will reduce smog forming emissions from new vehicles by 90% by 2010, compared to levels in 2000.

I will depart again from my notes to explain that our auto emissions agreement is much better than California's agreement.

As important, we are laying the foundation for fundamental changes we will need to ensure long term environmental sustainability. Over the last year, the Prime Minister has given

unprecedented momentum to Canada's environmental policy. The Speech from the Throne contained no less than 13 actions that became the basis of project green. Project green puts environmental sustainability at the heart of our economic agenda. Last February the Minister of Finance gave Canada its greenest budget since Confederation.

In April the Government of Canada released a comprehensive plan for honouring our Kyoto commitments. Our environmental agenda is going ahead on all fronts but we also agree with the commissioner that more needs to be done.

Through project green, our action plans for clean air, water, nature, contaminated sites and climate change will provide enormous benefits for Canadians. We are moving forward and I am confident Canadians will continue to see the progress that we are making.

● (1835)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for deviating so wildly from his prepared notes but I need him to address a couple of specific items when we are talking about this, as we move forward to COP 11, this important international debate.

The government took a report from the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, a report that was endorsed by members of his own party, and took the maximum allotted time to respond. It must have diligently been going through its response. It responded by refusing, refuting and denying just about every recommendation the committee made.

The committee went through the issue of climate change witness by witness over a number of months. We devoted most of our time during the last sitting to make some very concrete proposals. We negotiated out from the different parties and interests across the country, along with members from all four corners of the House, and the government took the report and said, "Thanks anyway but no thanks".

The government is now going to move over to the international stage in Montreal hoping to have some sort of ability to criticize other countries and yet, even in our own internal documents, the Auditor General and others, we are failing on our climate change plan.

● (1840)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, I have already mentioned a few of the examples that we will celebrate at COP 11. We are not there to criticize other countries. We are there to celebrate all the accomplishments I have just mentioned.

Adjournment Proceedings

As I said, in 2005 we have put in \$5.2 billion in long term investments for the environment. This also demonstrates the government's commitment to advance the type of innovative market based mechanisms that will better serve to align economic and environmental signals.

For example, we are rewarding creativity and innovation by funding projects that reduce greenhouse gas and smog-causing emissions through the climate fund. We are increasing our focus on renewable energy through tax and production incentives. We are providing additional support for wind power production by quadrupling investments in the wind power production incentive. We are working with the private sector to improve the commercialization of environmental technologies through market based incentives and by increasing funding to the green municipal fund to encourage uptake for environmentally sustainable technologies.

We have much to celebrate at COP 11. The environment world is coming to Canada. It will be our biggest meeting of any type, except for sports. This is a great initiative that Canada is taking for the environment internationally.

[Translation]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Madam Speaker, this adjournment debate marks the second time in two weeks that I rise in this House regarding the closure of the Quebec City sorting centre and its transfer to Montreal.

The minister's replies last week to my numerous questions, and those of his parliamentary secretary, are totally unacceptable and are a show of contempt towards the 130,000 petitioners who oppose the decision made by Canada Post. These include socio-economic and political stakeholders, and postal workers affected by this decision.

Given such a large number of people from the whole Quebec City region opposing the decision, the minister can no longer remain silent and take cover behind Canada Post officials. He must now show leadership regarding this issue and take concrete action. This is what the Quebec City region is asking him to do. First, he must put that decision on hold until an overall postal services restructuring plan is developed, and he must also agree to meet coalition officials to discuss this issue.

The minister tries to justify his wait-and-see attitude by saying that the closure will not result in the loss of any jobs. Last week, I thought I had shown that, over time, the Quebec City region would lose 500 jobs, which represents \$15 million in salaries. Either the minister does not understand the situation, or he does not want to understand it. If I did not succeed in convincing him, he should meet with coalition members. They will confirm my claims.

It has now been four weeks since the coalition opposing the closure of the Quebec City sorting centre asked to meet the minister. The coalition did not get a reply. It did not even get an acknowledgment from the minister. I thought that the representations I made last week would have spurred the minister into action and that a member of his office would have quickly organized a meeting with the coalition or, at least, would have acknowledged its request, but none of that has happened.

Out of respect for the 130,000 petitioners represented by the coalition, the minister should at least respond to the written request he received. That is just plain good manners. Either he denies the request or, as I once invited him to do, he can agree to meet with representatives of this coalition in order to hear and talk about the many reasons to keep a mail sorting centre in Quebec City.

This would also be a sign that the minister was open and acting in good faith here. Can he assure the members of this House that this will be done without further delay?

Once again, the minister has not given a clear answer to the questions I have asked him in the House. I want the minister to stop saying that Canada Post's efficiency and productivity is behind the closure of the mail sorting centre in Quebec City. He is disregarding one of Canada Post's arguments to justify closing the sorting centre in Quebec City. Why then are there six in Ontario, two in Alberta, two in British Columbia and only the one in Quebec City is to be closed? Why the one in Quebec City?

His argument about productivity would be more convincing if it was accompanied by an overall restructuring plan. This is what we want from the minister. It is very plain and simple. He needs to present his restructuring plan and then we will be able to see the overall issue and understand why Quebec City is the first. Why should Quebec be subject to a closure before Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia?

● (1845)

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad to have a second chance to talk more about the great work Canada Post does and its modernization.

I can assure the member that 500,000 jobs will not be lost at this particular plant because of its closing. I would ask the Bloc Québécois members once again not to attack other provinces when they are trying to make their case.

I would like to talk briefly about Canada Post and hopefully answer some of the member's questions.

Canada Post is a company in which we as Canadians take pride. It is a company recognized around the world for its reliability, efficiency and postal expertise.

Canada Post makes a significant contribution to the national economy. Each year the corporation spends \$2.8 billion on the purchase of goods and services, thereby creating 30,000 additional jobs. It does this responsibly. While the former post office department often posted deficits of about \$500 million a year, Canada Post is now earning profits for its shareholders, all Canadians.

The creation of Canada Post Corporation in 1981, approved by all political parties of the House of Commons and by the postal unions, has paid off. What an outstanding turnaround in a very short period of time.

Adjournment Proceedings

Canada Post's financial success has not been achieved on the backs of Canadians. Quite the contrary, letters are now delivered at some of the most competitive rates in the world, despite a harsh climate and a vast country.

However, without wishing to appear alarmist, the corporation is facing major challenges similar to all postal administrations around the world. Communication methods are changing fast. Canada Post must adapt to market changes in response to declining mail volumes noted in recent years, a decline that will be proportional to the rise in electronic communications. At the same time, improvements to processes, productivity and equipment in recent years have developed greater processing capacity in some postal plants across Canada.

In this very real context, Canada Post is continually assessing its network of mail processing plants throughout Canada to optimize its operations and improve service to Canadians. Given this current context, the recent announcement that processing of letter mail and ad mail will be transferred from Quebec City to Montreal over the next two years was necessary.

The transfer will be carried out without putting a single permanent employee out of a job. This is remarkable. This commitment is possible because Canada Post can easily reassign its employees affected by the transfer to other locations in Quebec. Some 300 of its 1,400 permanent employees will take a well deserved retirement of their own free will. A vast majority of retiring employees are postal clerks and letter carriers. Canada Post is providing them with a good retirement consistent with their collective agreement.

The situation will not be unique to Quebec. In fact the decline in the number of letters to be processed, a result of the growth in electronic communications, is forcing Canada Post to review its operations at the national level. It must also consider that no fewer than 10,000 employees will retire over the next four years of their own free will and in full compliance with their collective agreements.

In Quebec City, Canada Post will continue to invest in the community and will remain a large employer by maintaining 1,100 jobs and economic benefits of \$90 million.

Planned investments for the Quebec region by Canada Post include \$750,000 to renovate its facility on Hughes-Randin Street for use as a parcel processing hub. It will also have to build a new letter carrier station to replace the one now at 300 Saint-Paul Street. That means an investment of another \$2 million to \$4 million. The same is true for the need to move administrative employees to another location, which will invest \$1.2 million in Quebec. Clearly Canada Post is not leaving Quebec.

On the matter of the future of the building at 300 Saint-Paul, and given that it will not close for another two years, this leaves enough time to find the best possible use for this location.

Canada Post will continue to meet its service commitments in Quebec by adapting its network and processing operations. These changes will have no effect on the quality of service presently

provided. Some 70% of this mail is already forwarded to Montreal after being processed a first time in Quebec City. By sending it to Montreal right away, service will be made better.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Madam Speaker, the response of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources is the same as the one given by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue last week. Since the response is the same, that makes one more person from this government minimizing the issue of closing the Quebec City sorting centre.

How can we talk about efficiency when a letter sent from Lévis goes through Montreal to then be sent back to Lévis? I have seen better efficiency in my day. How can we say that no jobs will be lost in the Quebec City area? Jobs will be lost in the medium term. We know full well that when the employees retire, this will be done by attrition. The employees will not be replaced. Furthermore, no one talks about the 160 casual and part-time employees. Mum is the word about that.

I, personally, am quite dissatisfied with this government's response. In Quebec City, 130,000 people have signed a petition against closing the Quebec City sorting centre and no one will listen to them or negotiate with the coalition in order to reach a satisfactory agreement—

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, as I already pointed out in the initial remarks, no permanent employee will lose his or her job. This commitment is possible because Canada Post will easily be able to reassign its employees affected by the transfer to other locations in Quebec since some 300 of its 1,400 employees will take a well deserved retirement of their own free will. The vast majority of retiring employees are postal clerks and letter carriers. Canada Post is providing them with a good retirement consistent with their collective agreement.

In Quebec, Canada Post will continue to invest in the community and will remain a large employer as it means 1,100 jobs and economic benefits of \$90 million. The 1,100 jobs include mail processors, letter carriers, mail service couriers, postmasters and assistants, rural and suburban mail carriers, supervisors, administrative employees and members of management.

Canada Post is confident it can improve its efficiency and service without permanent employees losing their jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): A motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:52 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, October 31, 2005

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Criminal Code

Ms. Lalonde	9219
Bill C-407. Second reading	9219
Mr. Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi)	9221
Mr. Macklin	9221
Mr. Kenney	9222
Mr. Comartin	9224
Ms. Gagnon (Québec)	9225
Mr. Carr	9226

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Pacific Gateway Act

Mr. Lapierre (Outremont)	9226
Bill C-68. Second reading	9226
Mr. Casson	9229
Mr. Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	9230
Mr. Merrifield	9230
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	9231
Mr. Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	9234
Mr. Bains	9235
Mr. Sorenson	9235
Ms. St-Hilaire	9236
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	9238
Mr. Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	9239
Mr. Abbott	9242
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	9243

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Housing

Mrs. Longfield	9243
----------------------	------

Softwood Lumber

Mr. Jean	9243
----------------	------

Golf

Mr. Thibault (West Nova)	9244
--------------------------------	------

Abitibi-Témiscamingue International Film Festival

Mr. Lemay	9244
-----------------	------

Arts and Culture

Mr. St. Amand	9244
---------------------	------

Sponsorship Program

Mr. Epp	9244
---------------	------

50th Anniversary of UNICEF

Mr. McGuinty	9244
--------------------	------

ADISQ Gala

Mr. Kotto	9245
-----------------	------

Mark Lowry

Ms. Bakopanos	9245
---------------------	------

Assisted Suicide

Mr. Trost	9245
-----------------	------

Kiwanis International

Ms. Catterall	9245
---------------------	------

New Democratic Party

Mr. Stoffer	9245
-------------------	------

Flames of Memory

Mr. Kenney	9246
------------------	------

Women's History Month

Ms. Demers	9246
------------------	------

Conservative Party of Canada

Mr. Goldring	9246
--------------------	------

HapMap

Mrs. Jennings	9246
---------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Sponsorship Program

Mr. Harper	9247
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	9247
Mr. Harper	9247
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	9247

Aboriginal Affairs

Mr. Harper	9247
Mr. Scott	9247
Mr. Prentice	9247
Mr. Scott	9247
Mr. Prentice	9247
Mr. Scott	9247

The Environment

Mr. Duceppe	9248
Mr. Dion	9248
Mr. Duceppe	9248
Mr. Dion	9248
Mr. Gauthier	9248
Mr. Dion	9248
Mr. Gauthier	9248
Mr. Dion	9248

International Trade

Mr. Layton	9248
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	9248
Mr. Layton	9248
Mr. McCallum (Markham—Unionville)	9249

David Dingwall

Mr. Pallister	9249
Mr. McCallum (Markham—Unionville)	9249

Canada Post

Mr. Pallister	9249
Mr. McCallum (Markham—Unionville)	9249

Petitions	
The Environment	
Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	9257
Income Tax Act	
Mr. Miller	9257
Goods and Services Tax	
Mr. Miller	9257
Foreign Adoptions	
Mr. Hill	9257
The Environment	
Mr. Hearn	9257
Questions passed as orders for returns	
Mr. LeBlanc	9257
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. LeBlanc	9258
Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	9258

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Pacific Gateway Act	
Bill C-68. Second reading	9258
Mr. Chan	9258
Mr. Abbott	9260
Mr. Kamp	9260
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	9260
Business of the House	
Mr. LeBlanc	9261
Motion	9261
(Motion agreed to)	9261
Pacific Gateway Act	
Bill C-68. Second reading	9261
Mr. Menzies	9261

Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	9263
Mr. Abbott	9263
Mr. André	9265
Mr. Bagnell	9265
Mr. Grewal (Newton—North Delta)	9265
Mr. Bell	9265
Mr. Grewal (Newton—North Delta)	9267
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	9268
Mr. Paquette	9268
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	9270
Mr. Laframboise	9270
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	9272
Mr. André	9272
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	9272
Mr. Jaffer	9275
Mr. Bell	9275
Mr. Vincent	9276
Mr. Casson	9276
Mr. Powers	9278
Mr. Day	9278
Mr. Carr	9279
Mr. Lévesque	9280
Mr. Carr	9280

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

The Environment	
Mr. Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	9282
Mr. Bagnell	9283
Canada Post Corporation	
Ms. Gagnon (Québec)	9284
Mr. Bagnell	9284

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