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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, October 19, 2011

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 19, 2011

The House met at 2 p.m.

[*Translation*]

Prayers

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

SUPREME COURT CANDIDATES

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, legal history will be made this afternoon. Two exemplary jurists, Justice Andromache Karakatsanis and Justice Michael Moldaver, will appear before a parliamentary committee to answer questions from members of Parliament concerning their abilities to serve on our country's highest court. This meeting marks the completion of an extensive consultative process to find the most qualified candidates and capable jurists to join the Supreme Court of Canada.

I was honoured to be chosen from among my caucus colleagues to serve as one of five members of the Supreme Court selection panel. The committee spent more than two months reviewing judgments by the prospective candidates and consulting prominent members of Ontario's legal community in order to come up with a short list. In the end, the panel's decision was unanimous. I believe both candidates are exceptional choices to fill the Supreme Court vacancies and will uphold the world-class reputation and historic legacy of the Supreme Court of Canada.

Of all my parliamentary duties, I consider having had input into the composition of the Supreme Court to have been the most interesting and most purposeful of my tasks.

CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT

Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in this short statement, I wanted to talk about something positive and extraordinary in my riding of Laval. However, in seeing what has been going on in the House in recent weeks, I have been dismayed at the attitude of the Conservative caucus, which is trying to push through old bills that were not passed in previous parliaments and that are proof of its bad faith. The Conservative caucus—the government—is desperate and determined to laugh in Canadians' faces. This is a rather awkward display of what it means to have a majority government.

I remind this caucus that Canadians are not stupid. They can understand, hear and grasp what is going on. We will remember. The Conservatives should take advantage of the time they have. The NDP is a government in waiting. It will show the Conservatives the door, as it did with the Liberals and the Bloc Québécois.

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[*English*]

VANCOUVER'S CHINATOWN

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week residents from across Vancouver joined the Chinese community from across Canada to celebrate the recognition of Vancouver's Chinatown as a national historic site of Canada. I was honoured to join my colleagues, the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism and the Minister of State for Seniors, in making the official announcement.

Vancouver's Chinatown is not only a sought-after tourist destination, it also has been and continues to be home to new immigrants seeking a better life for themselves and their families. Vancouver's Chinatown is a powerful symbol of the combined hopes, dreams and aspirations of generations of Chinese migrants who have contributed immensely to our country's profound cultural mosaic.

This designation is an honour for the many pioneers of Chinatown, the people of Vancouver and the Chinese community across Canada. It is a historic recognition as well as a celebration of the struggles and achievements of the Chinese people in Canada.

*Statements by Members***BAY OF FUNDY**

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are only 22 days left for people to vote for the Bay of Fundy as one of the new seven wonders of nature.

[*Translation*]

The Bay of Fundy is best known for its high tides, the highest in the world, which allow people to go kayaking or walk on the ocean floor. These tides do more than attract tourists; they also represent tremendous potential for renewable energy.

[*English*]

People from around the world come to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to take in the breathtaking experience of the Bay of Fundy. Whether it be the powerful tides, the impressive whales or the fossils along its banks, the Bay of Fundy offers unique adventures for everyone.

[*Translation*]

As this is the last chance for Canada to be recognized as having one of the new seven wonders of the world, I encourage all Canadians to vote for the Bay of Fundy.

[*English*]

I urge everyone to visit the votemyfundy.com website and vote to help this magic area of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia get the recognition it deserves.

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NEW BRUNSWICK SOUTHWEST

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to address the chamber. I will endeavour to honour and respect it throughout my time in this place. My congratulations to you, young sir, on your election as Speaker, and to all hon. colleagues.

I am proud to serve with the Prime Minister, whose achievements have recently earned him the trust of Canadians.

I am both grateful and humbled to have received the confidence of the people of New Brunswick Southwest and will devote my time here to advancing their interests. In that pursuit, I have a great example to guide me.

My predecessor, the honourable Greg Thompson, was a credit to our noble calling. His relentless efforts on behalf of the people of New Brunswick Southwest achieved real results for my constituency, my province and my country.

A tribute dinner will take place for Greg on Saturday, October 22 at the Algonquin Hotel in Saint Andrew's, New Brunswick, where Greg and his wife will be honoured for their many years of public service.

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● (1410)

DELVIEW SECONDARY SCHOOL

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge an exceptional group of young people from my riding of Newton—North Delta. On October 13,

students at Delview Secondary School organized a massive food drive called “Thanks 4 Giving”. Over 400 students collected nearly 15,000 cans of food from and for our community, and items continue to pour in every day. The food will be donated to Deltassist and the Surrey Food Bank Society.

In these challenging economic times it is imperative for government to address the growing issues of poverty that are plaguing our communities across the country, where too many people are without jobs, affordable housing and a decent standard of living.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the community spirit, teamwork and generosity of the staff, parents, students and constituents who have collected food outside school hours for those people in dire need.

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SUNCOR ENERGY INC.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk about a Canadian success story that will make every Canadian proud. It is a story about Suncor Energy Inc.

This year Suncor Energy Inc. won the 2011 Emerald Challenge Award. The award recognizes environmental excellence and leadership relating to activities occurring in Canada's oil sands. It demonstrates Suncor's investments in technologies that help advance its environmental performance and reduce our environmental footprint. This new approach has already enabled Suncor to cancel plans for five additional tailing ponds. That is only the beginning. The company expects a rapid restoration of natural habitats as it helps reduce the number of tailing ponds from eight to one at its current mine site. This new approach will allow it to reclaim entire mine sites up to 70% faster.

Today I recognize the great accomplishments of Suncor and its management team. I believe this is the beginning of a better future for the Canadian environment and is in the best interests of Canada.

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BAY OF FUNDY

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to promote one of the natural wonders of our country, the Bay of Fundy. The tides of the Bay of Fundy are the highest in the world. It is an area that has proven to be an endless source of opportunities and motivation for all.

Given the importance and greatness of this area, it is not surprising that the Bay of Fundy is a prime candidate for becoming one of the new seven wonders of nature. When this campaign started in 2007, the Bay of Fundy was one of 441 entries worldwide vying for this distinction. It is now one of 28 remaining candidates and the only one from Canada.

Please help the Bay of Fundy, a true Canadian icon, reach the dream of becoming one of the new seven wonders of nature. Voting can be done by visiting www.votemyfundy.com or by texting the word “FUNDY” to 77077.

Statements by Members

I encourage all members of Parliament to proudly display the Bay of Fundy pin to help promote this wonderful effort. Most important, I encourage them to vote for the Bay of Fundy.

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[Translation]

RIDING OF SAINT-BRUNO—SAINT-HUBERT

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about a great man who visited my riding. Gilbert Gilles Boulanger, a gunner in the Second World War, was in my riding to lend his support to the Fondation Aérovision de Saint-Hubert. Mr. Boulanger piloted a CF-18 at the age of 88 and overcame cancer. At the age of 90, he is still passionate about flying.

I am also pleased to rise in the House to congratulate the 800 students at the Pensionnat des Sacrés-Coeurs de Saint-Bruno who celebrated the International Day of Peace in their own special way. They gave me a box of letters and drawings to give to the Prime Minister.

I would like to congratulate the students, teachers and leaders for taking the time and the initiative to promote peace. I would like to share with the House the message that they sent to me: “Peace, peace, we want peace! Here, there, now!”

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

ROGERS COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to congratulate Rogers Communications today as it celebrates 50 years of pioneering success.

In 1960, Ted Rogers took the first of many risks and signed his name to an \$85,000 loan to purchase a fledgling FM radio station.

In the late 1960s, Rogers Cable TV was launched with a mere 300 subscribers.

In the 1980s, when few could foresee a wireless future, Ted Rogers made a big bet by investing millions to help build one of Canada's first wireless networks.

Before he passed away in 2008, Ted had built a telecommunications and media powerhouse. His company has grown from a small group of visionaries into a pillar of Canadian business.

On behalf of the Conservative caucus, I wish to congratulate Rogers Communications on 50 years of relentless pursuit of a dream.

I close today with the signature closing Ted used in every single speech and which continues to be Rogers Communications' unofficial motto, “The best is yet to come”.

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[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite the women's liberation movement of the 1960s, the primary responsibility for raising children still lies with women in

Canadian families. That is why I wish to point out to all members, in all parties of this House, just how difficult it can be for women to find a positive work-life balance.

Our parliamentary procedures are outdated and should reflect the social realities of the 21st century. It is our duty to reform our procedures and institutions in order to allow the women of this House to find a positive work-life balance. Similarly, fathers who sit in this House and members who come from remote areas are certainly aware of the realities of parliamentary life that force many women to choose between their political careers and a balanced family life. The women of this House are vital to the functioning of our democratic institutions.

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[English]

WOMEN IN CANADIAN MILITARY FORCES

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, October is Women's History Month in Canada. This year's theme, Women in Canadian Military Forces: A Proud Legacy, highlights the important contributions of women to the Canadian military forces throughout Canada's history.

It is an ideal time to learn about the work of outstanding women who serve and protect Canada and Canadians through key roles in the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Women such as Elizabeth Gregory MacGill, the first woman aircraft designer in the world, Josée Kurtz, the first woman to command a warship, and Marie Louise Fish, the first woman to serve as a naval officer at sea, are inspiring leaders. Their milestone achievements helped pave the way for women in the Canadian military.

On behalf of all Canadians, we thank them for being an important part of our national military history.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently participated in the first-ever Global Summit Against Persecution and Discrimination, which brought together former political prisoners, dissidents and victims of torture and discrimination, some of whom I represent. They unanimously adopted the landmark Declaration of Dissidents for Universal Human Rights. It is a clarion call by these heroes of human rights to hold their perpetrators to account, and includes the following initiatives: an action plan for Canada and the international community to combat the culture of impunity at the United Nations; adoption of resolutions holding country violators to account, such as the one presented yesterday by United Nations Watch and a coalition of dissidents condemning Syria's mass killings and calling also for the release of political prisoners, including Chinese Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo; and the formation of an interparliamentary group for human rights in Iran to promote and protect the cause of Iranian human rights as a priority on both the national and international agendas.

*Oral Questions***UKRAINE**

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government took the initiative this week to have a debate on the situation in Ukraine to voice concerns over the Yulia Tymoshenko verdict. We did what was right, and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress agrees. It said that our government is taking the bold and important step of holding a debate on the Tymoshenko trial.

Our government is deeply concerned by the situation in Ukraine. One cannot forget what a good friend Canada has been to Ukraine, the ancestral homeland of 1.2 million Canadians.

Since 2006 our government has recognized Holodomor Memorial Day; supported democratic reforms in Ukraine; expressed Canada's commitment to the support for human rights, democratic development and free and fair elections in Ukraine, entered into historic free trade negotiations with Ukraine in 2010; and much more.

Our government has been a friend of a free and democratic Ukraine. We hope freedom and democracy are vital parts of Ukraine's future.

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● (1420)

ROGERS COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to congratulate Rogers Communications on 50 years of driving Canadian innovation.

It was Ted Rogers' father who invented the world's first batteryless radio. Little could he have imagined the firsts his son would go on to pioneer in the decades ahead.

In the early 1990s, Rogers was the first in North America to launch digital cellular. Not long after that, it was the first to pioneer high-speed home Internet. More recently it was the first in Canada to launch a next-generation LTE wireless network.

Rogers employs more than 30,000 Canadians in high-value jobs and provides almost one in three Canadians with the services Canadians need to connect with the world around them.

Each year Rogers invests billions of dollars in its networks. It is among the top R and D spenders in Canada. It increased its research and development budget through the recent economic downturn.

The New Democrats, the official opposition, offer our congratulations as Rogers celebrates this impressive milestone. We look forward to the future of even more exciting Canadian innovation.

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[Translation]

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems that a former New Democrat MP is teaching the new NDP MPs in this House the art of obstruction, time-wasting and impertinence, and all with a view to obstructing the democratic process. The most disappointing thing is that this type of tactic is being used by a party that promised to promote decorum in the House of Commons.

The hon. member for Vancouver East used to criticize these tactics in committee, calling them mean-spirited, vindictive and anti-democratic. The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre described this type of strategy in committee as a way of heading toward a constitutional crisis. Their House leader refuses to comment and, with such tactics, we can see why.

The new NDP MPs did not come to Ottawa to play these dirty games. They should rise up against these tactics and help our Conservative government deliver the goods for Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are ignoring the needs of Prairie farmers by dismantling the Canadian Wheat Board even though that is not what they want. Farmers made it clear: they want to keep the Canadian Wheat Board. But the Conservatives are refusing to listen. They are refusing to accept the results of the referendum on the Canadian Wheat Board.

Why dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board even though that is not what farmers want?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, western farmers have been speaking with a strong voice for a long time.

[English]

Western Canadian farmers have long been looking for the freedom to market their grain, just like farmers in Quebec and other parts of eastern Canada have. We are going to give them that freedom.

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is what the law says:

The Minister shall not cause to be introduced in Parliament a bill that would exclude any kind, type, class or grade of wheat or barley...unless

(a) the Minister has consulted with the board...; and

(b) the producers of the grain have voted in favour of the exclusion or extension...

That is the law of the land. Why will the Prime Minister not respect the law, respect the producers and keep the Canadian Wheat Board in place?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the law of our constitutional system is extremely clear. A previous government cannot bind a future government to its policy. This government received a mandate from western Canadian farmers, who did not vote for that party or anyone over there, to make sure that these people have the freedom that other people in this country have long taken for granted, and we are going to give it to them because that is what they want us to do.

•(1425)

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister seems to have forgotten about the law and order government. I just read the law to the Prime Minister. It says that the minister shall not cause to be introduced in Parliament a bill impacting the Wheat Board's mandate unless the producers have voted in favour of these changes. It has not happened.

Why will the Prime Minister not respect our farmers, respect democracy, and respect the law of the land?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this party has for a long time received a strong mandate from western Canadian farmers in a democratic election for the platform on which we are proceeding. That party over there does not speak for those people, does not care about those people, does not represent those people. We do and we are going to act in their interests.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the ink was not even dry on the free trade agreement before the Americans started gunning for the Wheat Board. That is because they know that the Wheat Board is a huge advantage to Canadian farmers. Thirteen times they filed complaints at trade tribunals and 13 times they were defeated because the American trade tribunal knows there is nothing unfair about Canadian farmers acting collectively in their own best interests.

Why is the Conservative government now doing the Americans' dirty work for them?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite should well know, there are some world-class Canadian traders, such as Viterra. The pulse industry and canola industry will now be able to handle those crops working with customers that they have worldwide. The Canadian Wheat Board will survive on a voluntary basis. They will be able to move on grains they are not pooling now. They will be able to broker grains. Everyone will be better off all the way around. Anywhere in the world this has been implemented, farmers have benefited.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, folklore has it that the Canadian beaver will bite off its own testicles when it is threatened and offer them up to its tormentors. I think that is a fitting metaphor for the way our Canadian government reacts to bullying on trade issues, by carving off pieces of our nation and offering them to the Americans.

Whether it is on softwood lumber or now the Canadian Wheat Board, why is our government so willing and eager to unilaterally surrender what little trade advantages we have? Whose side is it on? Why is it selling out Canadian interests?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that is a very fitting metaphor because the member for Winnipeg Centre is impotent to stand in the way of farmers getting freedom.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the same subject, with a slightly different tone. In his first answer to the Leader of the Opposition, I heard the Prime Minister clearly state

Oral Questions

that he was confident that he had the full support of the majority of western farmers.

I will ask him a simple question. If the Prime Minister is so confident that he does have that support, why will he not put this question in a plebiscite? We have had a referendum. Why not have a plebiscite and let the prairie farmers themselves decide what is going to them. Let them—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot let go of the earlier exchange. I just hope the member for Winnipeg Centre' bark is not as bad as his bite.

In terms of the question put by the hon. member, we know we have a democratic mandate from western Canadian farmers. Their views are well-known. They have long favoured, by a large majority, dual marketing. There is really no debate about this. The only reason the Liberal Party does not understand that is that it does not have people on the ground in western Canada who know this.

* * *

•(1430)

[Translation]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Prime Minister another question. I am absolutely certain that, after the American ambassador's speech yesterday about the buy American policy, the Prime Minister called President Obama to discuss this issue and all the other cases in which Canada is facing severe discrimination as a result of American protectionism.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what President Obama said when they spoke yesterday?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in regular contact with our American counterparts. They are well aware of our position on the buy American policy. It seems to me that protectionism is a hindrance to growth rather than a help, and we are encouraging our American friends not to take such action.

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[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the government have come up with this completely unrealistic number of \$74.6 million as the cost for the changes in the Criminal Code that have been proposed by his government. There is not a person out there in the field who believes any of these numbers. They have absolutely no credibility with anybody.

Just at the moment, when the American conservative movement, to which the Prime Minister has paid such tribute his entire political career, is suddenly giving its head a shake and realizing just how wrong this path is, how expensive it is, how ineffective it is and how it is not, in fact, achieving any of the results it wants, why is the Prime Minister taking this country down exactly that same path?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I completely disagree with the premise of that question. In fact, as members know, incarceration rates in much of the United States are many times higher than those in Canada. It is a different approach.

In any case, in terms of the financial costs of the bill, these numbers have been provided to Parliament on multiple occasions. It does not matter whether the leader of the Liberal Party believes them. Those are the numbers.

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TAXATION

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, young families are feeling the squeeze from all sides. They are struggling to raise their kids, pay their bills, take care of their parents. The cost of living is skyrocketing while incomes have stalled. The average family makes just over \$68,000, the same as in 1976, and yet Canada's top CEOs now average whopping \$6.6 million a year.

Why are Conservatives adding to this inequality? Why will they not help out struggling Canadian families?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have made substantial tax reductions for Canadian families, a total, for a typical Canadian family, of about \$3,000 a year. We have cut taxes in every way that the government collects them. We have increased the amount Canadians can earn tax free. We have fewer Canadians now paying any federal tax all. As well, there have been the creation of 650,000 net new jobs since the end of the recession.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, clearly, things are getting so much worse for young families. Families are tired of the same old failed Conservative policies, no plan to create jobs and no plan to make life more affordable. Families today have a lower standard of living than their parents. CEO salaries are now one hundred times that of an average Canadian. Banks get richer. Young families are squeezed by bills and debt.

Why are the government and the minister ignoring the needs of young Canadian families?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why is the official opposition continually voting against every tax measure we bring into the House to help families in Canada and to help those who are on social assistance and who want to work? It was the party opposite that voted against the working income tax benefit, which is probably the most important social reform since the RRSP, but the NDP members voted against it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new study from the University of British Columbia confirms that it is becoming increasingly difficult for Canadians to raise their families. Families are facing an increase in housing costs, a stagnation of income and a decrease in services. They are having more and more trouble making ends meet.

Why does this government not make life more affordable for these families rather than lowering the taxes of large corporations?

• (1435)

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that the NDP's solution to all of this is a new \$10 billion tax, which it put forward to the Canadian people during the last election and which was resoundingly rejected.

What the Canadian people and Canadian families need is tax relief. They can pay less tax and they need jobs, so we are creating jobs as well. I hope the member opposite will vote for the hiring credit for new hires that is in the bill before the House, the second budget bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, Canadian families have a lower standard of living than baby boomers did at their age. The average annual income of Canadian families has remained stable since the mid-1970s, but the cost of housing has increased by 76%. Canadian families have record levels of household debt.

When will the Conservatives take care of this generation, which is losing services and being pushed into excessive debt?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows or should know, Canada is relatively well off. We have the best debt to GDP number in the G7. We have the best employment job creation record in the G7.

Forbes magazine, *The Economist* and the IMF say that Canada is the best place to invest in the world in the next five years. These are all matters with which Canadians can be proud. We have to be cautious. It is a fragile economic recovery globally and we are working hard to resolve the crisis in Europe. However, having said that, Canada is relatively well off.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new report from the Canadian Council of Chief Executives and the Canada China Business Council says that the Conservatives have fumbled economic dealings with the region so badly that Canada now has a bad reputation with Asia. Once again, the Conservatives are blundering relations with yet another important trade partner.

How can Canadians trust the Conservatives to move Canada forward on trade when every time they sign a deal they set the country back?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that closer and deeper economic ties between Canada and Asia will benefit both our countries by creating more jobs, opportunities and prosperity.

The facts are this. I was in China last week demonstrating what Canada has to offer and to help expand our trade and investment relationship. Negotiations are moving forward on a FIPA with China. The week before I was in Indonesia and I signed Canada's first trade and investment framework agreement with Asia. We are getting it done for hard-working Canadians.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that even the government's friends say that it has fumbled another deal. Again today, we heard that the Conservatives have continued to mess up the relations with the U.S. Another round of U.S. stimulus has meant that Canada is being excluded.

The Conservatives continue to ask Canadians to trust them while they negotiate a massive, closed door deal with Europe.

Every time the Conservatives make a deal, Canada loses. When will the Conservatives stop folding on trade negotiations and start standing up for Canadians?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while that member was here grandstanding, I was in Washington dealing with my counterpart and meeting with key decision-makers and business people in the United States.

In these challenging times, deeper trade ties are the best way to create jobs on both sides of the border. We will continue to demand the removal of buy American measures. They are hurtful to both economies on both sides of our border. Protectionist measures, as proposed in the American jobs bill, are a danger to our fragile global economic recovery.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, his weak response is a reflection of their weakness at the bargaining table. Canada is in the process of negotiating a trade agreement with the European Union that could disrupt our local dairy and cheese markets because of the massive influx of products from a market of 650 million people. Our supply management system, which has been working effectively for 40 years, is in jeopardy.

Does this government commit to taking the supply management system off the bargaining table and protecting the families who depend on this industry?

• (1440)

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have made it clear, time and time again, that we are defending supply management. We are standing up for the farmers and their families of this country.

The truth is that the NDP is opposed to trade. That is the reality of it and the proof is in the pudding. The NDP members talk big about trade and about fair trade but what they really mean is no trade at all.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TRANSPORT

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, an information leak revealed that the government has been in possession of a report since January. This report shows that a high-speed train originating in Quebec City would benefit the entire Canadian economy. Canada is the only G8 country that does not have infrastructure for high-speed trains. That is a deficit that puts us at a competitive disadvantage.

Where is the Conservatives' plan for a high-speed train to bring Canada up to speed with the rest of the world?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we received the report and are reviewing it. This report was funded by three partners: the Government of Quebec, the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada. And, as is appropriate, we will wait for the Province of Ontario to appoint its next transportation minister. We will speak with these people and a decision will be made public.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is a very slow read. This leaked report is suggesting that we abandon passenger rail in southern Ontario and ignore its connections with the U.S. High-speed rail from Quebec City to Windsor and on to Chicago should be a priority. The United States is moving forward, investing hundreds of millions of dollars, while Canada just studies the issue. Even Uzbekistan is rolling right past us, building high-speed rail.

Will the minister create a stakeholder working group today to ensure that high-speed rail from Windsor to Quebec City happens and we connect into Chicago? Will the minister act and bring the stakeholders in and see some action for a change?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that MP already knows I will work hard for a new bridge between Windsor and Detroit. He knows it is long. We have a lot of démarche to do and we have a lot of work with the U.S.A. and now we want to be getting something for Chicago. How many years does the member think it will take?

Oral Questions

For now, the study has been received by the government. We will study it and then the province of Ontario will name its new minister of transport and we will discuss it with him or her.

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CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the U.S. ambassador basically told the Minister of International Trade that it was lovely having a chat but that the United States will maintain its protectionist stance denying Canadian participation in stimulus.

Now, on this very day, the government is selling out farmers' marketing rights to United States interests. After winning 14 challenges with the U.S., now the Prime Minister serves up the Canadian Wheat Board on a silver platter.

Why is the Minister of International Trade consistently allowing a sellout to U.S. interests?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have made it very clear, time and time again, that we are focused on building Canada's economy and on creating jobs.

I was in the United States yesterday and the day before meeting with my counterpart and meeting with key decision-makers in the United States making it very clear that barriers to trade hurt both of our countries. We will continue to stand up for hard-working Canadians. Why will the Liberals not?

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for weeks U.S. legislators have mused about putting a new tax on U.S.-bound cargo transported through Canadian ports. Instead of confronting this job killing threat head on, the Conservative minister has essentially said, "Don't worry, be happy".

Well he should worry and he should act. The U.S. government is formally considering this unfair new tariff.

Why is the Conservative government abandoning Canadian businesses and ports? Why is it refusing to fight this next protectionist attack on Canadian jobs?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the premise of that question. As I have repeatedly said, any new tax, any new barrier at the border raises consumer costs—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The Minister of International Trade has the floor.

•(1445)

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, we welcome the U.S. ambassador's, David Jacobson, assurances that no new taxes on cargo entering the United States from Canada will be forthcoming. We also share his view that the Canada-U.S. trading relationship is the very best on earth.

We will defend Canada's competitive advantages, especially with respect to its ports. I have made this clear to the FMC Commissioner Lidinsky and my U.S. counterpart, Ambassador Kirk.

Canada's ports and railways are competing fairly and the Asia-Pacific gateway initiative is working—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Conservatives negotiated their perimeter deal with the U.S., what exactly did Canada get in return?

There was no amnesty for Canada-U.S. dual citizens who are facing U.S. fines on their Canadian savings. There are no privacy measures to stop the U.S. from forcing Canadian banks to disclose personal information on Canadians. There is nothing for Canadian workers who stand to lose their jobs facing U.S. protectionism and buy American provisions.

Why will the Conservatives not stand up for Canada when they are negotiating with America?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, FACTA has far reaching implications as it would require Canadian banks to collect a great deal of information and at a very substantial expense. I have reviewed this with all of our Canadian banks. I have also raised it with the secretary of the treasury and my officials continue to discuss it with them. We are hopeful that we will be able to arrive at an arrangement with the Americans that would not require this needless expense.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group has called on member states to address human rights directly and make it a priority at their upcoming meetings in Perth.

In 41 of 54 Commonwealth states being gay is still illegal, meaning people who are otherwise law-abiding could be arrested and prosecuted just for being gay.

Would the Minister of Foreign Affairs commit to using Canada's prominent role in the Commonwealth to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights are a high priority at the Commonwealth heads of government meeting next week in Perth?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada will be taking a very active role in Perth to ensure the issue of human rights is front and centre. There are substantial proposals that will be before Commonwealth leaders, including issues with respect to human rights, a Commonwealth charter, more democracy and more freedom. That certainly includes the rights of gays and lesbians.

Oral Questions

The member opposite and the House can be assured that Canada will continue to push human rights at the Commonwealth summit.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, The Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group is calling on member states to support the decriminalization of homosexuality. This is a fundamental human rights issue and an important step in the fight against the spread of HIV-AIDS.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs commit to using Canada's diplomatic influence to put an end to the criminalization of homosexuality around the world? This is 2011—it is about time.

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, absolutely. At the last Commonwealth summit, the Prime Minister was able to bring the objections of all members of this House to the government of Uganda for an outrageous bill that was before its parliament.

At the Commonwealth summit in Perth, we will continue to fight for human rights to ensure that Canadian values are promoted and advanced at these international summits, and that certainly includes the rights of gays and lesbians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism does not intervene by tomorrow, two young homosexual men, David Perez and Pablo Gonzalez, will be deported to Mexico. The two fear for their safety if they return to Mexico, but the Canada Border Services Agency has refused to delay their removal pending an appeal on humanitarian grounds.

Will the minister intervene and stop this forced removal until the appeal is heard?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a very fair asylum system, but it is a legal system, not a political system. It is up to the courts, to the quasi-judicial bodies such as the Immigration and Refugee Board, and to the Federal Court, to decide whether or not people are refugees who need Canada's protection. It is totally inappropriate for members of Parliament or even ministers to reverse the legal decisions of our just legal system.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that when they return to Mexico, these two men and their family members will again be subjected to threats, violence and persecution.

Before coming to Canada, they were attacked many times by the authorities that should have been protecting them. Mr. Perez and Mr. Gonzalez have legitimate reasons to fear for their lives if they leave Canada.

What steps is this government taking to ensure that violence against these men and other members of Mexico's homosexual community is taken seriously?

● (1450)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Parliament created the Immigration and Refugee Board to examine asylum claims on the basis of evidence and the criteria permitted by our laws. It is up to the board to decide if a person is being persecuted or if the personal safety of that person is threatened. It is up to the Federal Court to review those decisions. There is even a pre-removal risk assessment. If the appeal is denied, another appeal to the Federal Court is possible. That means that we have a fair and just system for all asylum seekers.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week is dedicated to small and medium-sized businesses that create wealth and jobs throughout Canada. They play a vital role in our economy.

Can the minister responsible for small business and tourism tell the House what measures have been taken to support these businesses?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to tell the House what this government is doing for small and medium-sized businesses. We have cut their tax rate to 11%. We have created the Red Tape Reduction Commission. We know that time is money for small businesses and they need to spend less time filling out government paperwork and more time doing what they do best—creating jobs in Canada. We support entrepreneurs and we are proud of them.

* * *

[*English*]

G8 SUMMIT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, after 131 days of dodging accountability, the Muskoka minister finally peered up over his desk. He made a quick little joke and he went back into hibernation. However, he did not say “sorry”. He did not explain why he ran a slush fund from his office. He did not explain why the paper trail was hidden from the Auditor General. The Auditor General said that the rules were broken and Parliament must investigate.

Will the minister do the right thing? Will he come out of hibernation, stand in this House, and commit to a full parliamentary investigation of his role in the G8 slush fund?

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

Oral Questions

The Auditor General has thoroughly looked into this issue. She has come out with a strong report. This government has fully accepted the report and fully accepted all the recommendations that she has represented.

I know the President of the Treasury Board is just as excited as I am to be able to appear before the public accounts committee. We look forward to that opportunity in very short order.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, clearly, after 132 days the Minister of Foreign Affairs does not get it either, that pork barrel boondoggles do not come in under budget.

The Auditor General does not approve them. They set up a slush fund with the three amigos: the mayor, the hotel manager and the minister. They blew through \$50 million, often in untendered contracts, with no oversight.

I am asking again, the Auditor General said the rules were broken, will he stand up and commit to a full investigation of this rogue minister? Unless we fix the rules, this will happen again and again under his watch.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to correct the record for my friend opposite. None of the three individuals he mentioned approved any of the 32 projects. I did.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it took the President of the Treasury Board 131 days to stand up and respond to our questions. However, since he merely spouted a few silly comments, we were left less than satisfied, especially knowing that the Auditor General said that the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka was the one responsible, that he disobeyed the rules and that he concealed information during the investigation.

Is that why the President of the Treasury Board is seeking revenge and cutting the Auditor General's funding?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government fully co-operated with the Auditor General. Sheila Fraser did an outstanding job for Canadians. She reviewed the 32 projects where every single dollar has been accounted for. Every single dollar went for public infrastructure. Every single project came in on or under budget. The fund itself was under spent.

With respect to the Auditor General, the Auditor General saw the leadership that the President of the Treasury Board was taking to try to rein in government spending and offered to voluntarily participate. That is leadership.

Mr. Speaker, while I am on my feet, we look forward to you participating too.

●(1455)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister told us that all 308 ridings received infrastructure funding. But, clearly, being friends with the minister makes it much easier to get in on that slush fund. The mayor of Huntsville should know: 18,000 residents, \$30 million.

Now that we know that the minister is able, or was able, to rise and speak, can he tell us if all ridings received a media centre that was never used by the media and a campus that is not being used by any students or are lucky enough to have a minister who never answers any questions?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would command the member to review the committee hearings on infrastructure where he will see the NDP member for Winnipeg Centre being quoted as saying, "I believe the money was fairly well distributed. NDP ridings did fairly well", and I agree.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am addressing my questions regarding official languages and the commissioner's report to the Prime Minister. In his report, the commissioner clearly states, "Five years after amendments were made to the Official Languages Act, the Government of Canada has still not affirmed, loudly and clearly, that full and proactive compliance with part VII of the Act is a priority."

When will the government clearly affirm that part VII and improving the situation of minority communities are still priorities for the Canadian government?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is a quotation from the report: "[Our government] systematically consults official language communities through working groups and federal councils, and when developing co-operation agreements with provinces and territories."

This government is well aware of the needs of official language communities and it takes those needs into account during the development and implementation of these programs. These are achievements. These are results. This is a Conservative government.

* * *

CANADA POST

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we learned yesterday that Canada Post is going ahead with cuts to work hours in post offices in Quebec that are unfair and disproportionate compared to the rest of the country. We are talking about 53% in Quebec, while the average in other provinces is 4% to 8%. As though that were not enough, in the market assessment criteria, Canada Post was suddenly much more interested in the political affiliation of the riding in which the post office is located.

Is this 53% cut the Conservative Party's response to the fact that it was rejected by the vast majority of Quebecers?

[English]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I reject the premise of the member's question.

The fact is that everyone who has a permanent job with Canada Post will continue to do so. There is some fluctuation in operations. This year there has been a reduction in postal demand in Quebec, but that just goes with the territory of a shifting market. Canada Post makes decisions based on its own operations. The government does not get involved.

The member should support the good work that Canada Post is doing.

* * *

[Translation]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Small Business Week, the situation of small businesses in the country is alarming. According to Industry Canada's most recent newsletter, funding for small business has levelled off since the Conservatives came to power. Business owners have to work extremely hard, but this government prefers to give enormous tax cuts to corporations, even though we know such cuts are ineffective.

Will this government listen to the NDP and lower the tax rate for small businesses?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I like hearing the NDP advocating tax cuts. The hon. member's argument is a bit awkward because, at the same time, some of his colleagues are advocating more government spending, bigger government and a larger debt. Instead of stimulating the economy, they want to give it a sedative by spending money that we do not have. The important thing for small businesses is that we have cut their tax rate to 11% so they can keep more money in their pockets and do what they have to do best: create jobs.

• (1500)

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to see the government simply tossing quarters here and there for small businesses.

Let us look at something else. Under this government, it is becoming increasingly difficult for young entrepreneurs to get funding, yet small businesses are responsible for creating 60% to 70% of jobs. This situation is unsustainable, especially knowing that the youth unemployment rate is at a worrisome level.

Will this government finally introduce a job creation tax credit, as the NDP has been asking for?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the hon. member that I was in Montreal yesterday with the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, which provides \$15,000 loans to young entrepreneurs who want to start a business and create wealth.

By giving that foundation a contribution of \$20 million in the last budget, we have enabled 1,000 young entrepreneurs across the country to create their own jobs, as well as jobs for other Canadians. That is what it means to support young entrepreneurs.

Oral Questions

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the government introduced the historic marketing freedom for grain farmers act. This legislation will allow farmers in my riding to market their wheat and barley to any buyer of their choice, just like farmers in eastern Canada. This is legislation that farmers want and expect to see passed by Parliament and it will modernize research in the grain sector in western Canada.

Would the Minister of Agriculture please tell the House what positive change the bill would bring to research and development in western Canada?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a farmer, my friend and colleague from Vegreville—Wainwright knows the value of innovation and research to the farm sector. That is why the government has been proud to partner with industry, academia, the provinces and so on to put forward a good, solid research-based scientific funding initiative.

We will continue to do that under that marketing freedom for grain farmers act, with a voluntary point of sale check off, which will keep the funding flowing for those great entities like the Canadian International Grains Institute, the Western Grains Research Foundation and the Malt Barley Technical Centre.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has become obvious to all Nova Scotians that in the case of the *MV Miner* it is not just the rotting carcass of the abandoned freighter that has been cut loose by the government, but the Province of Nova Scotia finds itself cut adrift as well.

Premier Dexter says that he cannot get an answer from Ottawa, so I will give the minister an opportunity to respond today.

Will the minister state clearly here today whether he believes the responsibility to remove that ship lies solely with the Province of Nova Scotia? It is a very simple question. Is the Province of Nova Scotia solely responsible for the removal of that wreck?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the premier has already had some discussions with the minister of this government. We gave him the answer we gave here in the House. Transport Canada's role is to ensure that Canada's waterways provide safe navigation, free of ship source pollution. We have determined that the *MV Miner* is not polluting the marine environment and is not a threat to navigation. That is provincial jurisdiction, and we will continue to work with the province.

*Oral Questions***PENSIONS**

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the last five years, many workers across Canada have seen their pensions drastically reduced because their employers went out of business. Yesterday, I tabled Bill C-331, my pension protection act, which is designed to give pensions priority at the time of bankruptcies. At the present time pensioners must wait behind junk bondholders and bank investments. This is done before they can get their pensions, their deferred wages. This is clearly wrong.

Will the government work with New Democrats to give pensioners the protection they need?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish the New Democrats would have worked with us when we moved legislation to protect those pensions to which he referred. In fact, in 2009 they voted against protecting pensions by requiring companies to fully fund pension benefits on planned termination. We also ensured that pensions would be stable for those seniors and we gave pensioners more negotiating powers in their own pensions. The NDP voted against all of those pieces in that legislation.

* * *

• (1505)

SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the national shipbuilding strategy will result in the creation of thousands of new jobs and billions in economic growth in the cities and communities all across Canada. This is an arm's-length process, independent from the government.

The leader of the official opposition is calling, at this late stage, for the government to politically intervene and provide the contract to all three shipyards that submitted bids.

Could the minister please respond to this call?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government made the historic decision to build our ships for the navy and coast guard right in Canada and that will result in the creation of 15,000 jobs annually for the next 30 years.

The decision to have two Canadian shipyards build our large ships was made in consultation with the shipyards themselves. The national shipbuilding strategy was designed to generate a competitive environment that would result in the best value for taxpayers.

I am also happy to inform the House that I met with the fairness monitor yesterday. He has submitted his final reports and has said that the decisions were made objectively, free from personal favouritism and political influence and encompass the elements of openness, competitiveness, transparency and compliance.

* * *

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada has one of the worst search and rescue response times in the world. A recent incident off Bell Island, Newfoundland showed just how bad it was.

After emergency flares were fired in the area, the Coast Guard called in a provincial ferry, full of passengers, to help the search and rescue effort. It then took the Canadian Coast Guard vessel over three hours to arrive on the scene.

This is not about a limo service from a fishing lodge; this is about human lives. How long would the minister be prepared to wait in icy water before being rescued?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows full well that the search and rescue system is made up of a network of potential responders that includes the Coast Guard, the Coast Guard auxiliary, the Canadian Forces and any vessel of opportunity. Any vessel within the vicinity of a search and rescue call can be asked to assist.

When the flares are discharged, the CCG will treat it as a matter of distress. If the member would like to be constructive, he would help us to take this message back to the public so that lives are not put at unnecessary risk.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite the recognition of Quebec as a nation, the three parties recognized in this House unanimously approved the appointment of a unilingual anglophone judge to the Supreme Court, demonstrating their lack of concern for the French language. In addition to being criticized by the public, this choice was also rejected by the Barreau du Québec, which asks the parliamentary committee tasked with examining these recommendations not to appoint the unilingual judge.

Will the Minister of Justice tell Quebeckers that he respects their language and that, as a result, his government will reconsider its decision to appoint a unilingual anglophone judge?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I should point out for the hon. member that the Supreme Court has an excellent reputation and record in facilitating both official languages of our country. I have every confidence that will continue.

The individuals whose names have been unanimously approved and recommended by the committees of the House of Commons are based on merit and legal excellence. That should be important for the hon. member as well.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans on the snow crab industry in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec.

I wish to acknowledge the contribution of former members of the committee, especially those who are no longer among us in the House. I would also like to thank committee members from both sides of the House for their collaboration in making this report a unanimous one. Special thanks, as well, go to the committee staff for the hard work.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee advises that pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2) the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business met to consider the items on the order of precedence. As a result of its establishment on Monday, October 3, it recommended that the items listed herein, which have been determined should not be designated non-votable, be considered by the House.

• (1510)

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2) the report is deemed adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

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PETITIONS

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are well aware of the destructive power of nuclear weapons, a power that the world's worst dictators and terrorists are trying to acquire.

I would like to present to the House a petition from the Oakville chapter of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. The petition is signed by 330 residents of Oakville.

The petitioners ask the government to commit to the motion passed by the House on December 7, 2010, regarding the global disarmament of nuclear weapons.

I am happy to present this petition for a response from our government.

ASBESTOS

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my petitioners call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all its forms and to institute a just transition program for asbestos workers in the communities in which they live.

Routine Proceedings

They call on the government to end all government subsidies of asbestos both in Canada and abroad and to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present this petition. Several people in my riding, St. John's, Twillingate, Lewisporte and even places in New Brunswick have signed this petition.

The petitioners ask the government to dismantle the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The Government of Canada should replace the current DFO with a scientifically-oriented body, although, in light of the recent announcement, that will be a little difficult to do.

The petitioners request that the Government of Canada initiate a public inquiry into all aspects of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, with emphasis on fisheries management, dismantle the current structure of the Department of the Fisheries and Oceans and put in place a model that takes into account fishery science, with an emphasis on serving the fishermen who make a living from the industry coast to coast to coast.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by literally thousands of Canadians from all over the country.

The petitioners draw the attention of Parliament to the fact that farmer and prairie grain producers have the right to decide the future of how they market their grain and of their organization, the Canadian Wheat Board. As such, they point out that they have conducted a prairie-wide vote on the single desk for wheat and barley. They point out that some 22,000 prairie farmers voted for the single desk monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Therefore, the petitioners request that the government and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food honour the democratically expressed wishes of western Canadian farmers and uphold the single desk monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a petition before the House, duly certified by the clerk of petitions, regarding the Government of Canada's hasty and uninformed announcement to close the Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

In light of the historic and recent marine tragedies, including the *Ocean Ranger* tragedy, the Cougar 491 tragedy, the *Ryan's Commander* tragedy, the *Melina and Keith II* tragedy, to name just a few incidents, as the petitioners say in their prayer, and due to fatalities unique to Newfoundland and Labrador in the maritime setting, they request that Parliament reverse its ultimate decision and immediately reinstate the Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

These petitioners hail from Englee, Newfoundland and Labrador, along with several other communities in my riding of Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by Canadians from across the country who recognize that farmers are able to work together to provide themselves with the best services and who are calling on the government to review its position regarding potentially abolishing the Canadian Wheat Board.

• (1515)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured today to bring forward a petition signed by hundreds of people from the wonderful province of Alberta.

The petitioners are asking parliamentarians to defend the right of western farmers, because the fundamental principle of any farm-based marketing system is that the farmers decide their future, and this is not happening in the case of the Wheat Board, wherein the government is intervening and ignoring the democratic choice of western prairie farmers.

The petitioners are asking us as the New Democratic Party to ensure their voices are heard in this House, because they are clearly not being represented by the government.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to bring to the attention of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food that the farmers have the right to decide the future of their marketing organization, the Canadian Wheat Board, and as such conducted a prairie-wide vote on the single desk for wheat and barley.

Therefore, the petitioners request the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to honour the democratically expressed wishes of western Canadian farmers.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I would ask for unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development be the committee for the purposes of the Statutes of Canada, 2003, Chapter 9, section 32.

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

The Speaker: Order, please.

The House will soon begin private members' business for the first time in this Parliament. I would, therefore, like to make a brief statement regarding the management of private members' business.

I want to remind all hon. members about the procedures governing private members' business and the responsibilities of the Chair in the management of this process.

[Translation]

As members know, certain constitutional procedural realities constrain the Speaker and members insofar as legislation is concerned. One such procedural principle concerns whether or not a private member's bill requires a royal recommendation. The Speaker has underscored this principle in a number of statements over the course of preceding parliaments.

[English]

As noted on page 831 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition:

Under the Canadian system of government, the Crown alone initiates all public expenditure and Parliament may only authorize spending which has been recommended by the Governor General. This prerogative, referred to as the "financial initiative of the Crown", is the basis essential to the system of responsible government and is signified by way of the "royal recommendation".

[Translation]

The requirement for a royal recommendation is grounded in constitutional principles found in the Constitution Act, 1867. The language of section 54 of that act is echoed in Standing Order 79(1), which reads:

This House shall not adopt or pass any vote, resolution, address or bill for the appropriation of any part of the public revenue, or of any tax or impost, to any purpose that has not been first recommended to the House by a message from the Governor General in the session in which such vote, resolution, address or bill is proposed

[English]

Any bill that authorizes the spending of public funds for a new and distinct purpose or effects an appropriation of public funds must be accompanied by a message from the Governor General recommending the expenditure to the House. This message, known formally as the "royal recommendation", can only be transmitted to the House by a minister of the crown.

A private member's bill that requires a royal recommendation may, however, be introduced and considered right up until third reading, on the assumption that a royal recommendation will be provided by a minister. If none is produced by the conclusion of the third reading stage, the Speaker is required to decline to put the question on third reading.

[*Translation*]

Following the establishment or the replenishment of the order of precedence, the Chair has developed a practice of reviewing items so that the House can be alerted to bills which, at first glance, appear to impinge on the financial prerogative of the Crown. The aim of this practice is to allow members the opportunity to intervene in a timely fashion to present their views about the need for those bills to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

● (1520)

[*English*]

Accordingly, following the establishment of the order of precedence on October 5, 2011, I wish to draw the attention of the House to three bills that give the Chair some concern as to the spending provisions they contemplate. These are Bill C-215, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (deletion of deduction from annuity), standing in the name of the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

[*Translation*]

There is also Bill C-291, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (waiting period and maximum special benefits), standing in the name of the member for Bourassa.

[*English*]

The third bill is Bill C-308, An Act respecting a Commission of Inquiry into the development and implementation of a national fishery rebuilding strategy for fish stocks off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, standing in the name of the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

[*Translation*]

I would encourage hon. members who would like to make arguments regarding the requirement of a royal recommendation for any of these bills, or with regard to any other bills now on the order of precedence, to do so at an early opportunity.

[*English*]

In addition, members are likely aware that a point of order was raised yesterday by the member for Windsor—Tecumseh regarding Bill C-317, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (labour organizations), standing in the name of the member for South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, arguing that this bill should have been preceded by a ways and means motion. As members know, limitations exist on the manner in which taxation measures may be amended in the absence of an accompanying ways and means motion. If a bill that requires a ways and means motion has not been preceded by one, our rules do not permit it to remain on the order paper.

Privilege

As I stated in the House last night, should any other members wish to provide additional information regarding Bill C-317, they are encouraged to raise them without unnecessary delay, as the Chair has taken note of the matter and would like to ensure the question is resolved as quickly as possible.

Finally, I should inform members that earlier today I received written notice from the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale that he would be unable to move his motion should private members' business begin tomorrow.

As members well know, private members' business is set to start 24 hours following the presentation of the report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs indicating those items which remain votable, and no exchange can be requested prior to the tabling of the said report.

The report was indeed tabled earlier today, and the member now finds himself in the unforeseen situation of not being able to provide the 48 hours' notice required to proceed with an exchange.

In this particular case, and considering my role regarding the orderly and timely conduct of private members' business pursuant to Standing Order 94(1)(a), I will allow the exchange to proceed without the usual notice requirement.

The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs may wish to examine this matter and consider whether our practices in relation to the application of Standing Orders 94(1)(a) and 94(2)(a) continue to serve the House in an effective manner. As your Speaker, I see no reason why the member occupying the first position on the order of precedence would not be afforded an opportunity to make an exchange, while all other members can do so.

[*Translation*]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

[*English*]

I understand the hon. member for Malpeque has some further comments about the question of privilege raised.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

LEGISLATION TO REORGANIZE THE CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in response to the government House leader's intervention yesterday afternoon with respect to the question of privilege I raised earlier in the day in regard to the legitimacy of the government's tabling Bill C-18, which in effect requires members of this House to engage in a process that, according to a statute previously passed by the House, violates a specific provision of that statute.

The government House leader appeared somewhat concerned over the fact that in my submission I failed to cite precedents. I feel obligated to address his concerns. His point, apparently, was that "... questions of law are beyond the jurisdiction of the Chair".

Privilege

What the government House leader overlooked the beginning of the quote he referenced. Perhaps it was not provided to him or perhaps it was purposely overlooked. It is on page 261 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition. I will read the whole quote. I will not leave part of it out.

Finally, while Speakers must take the Constitution and statutes into account when preparing a ruling, numerous...

Note the word “numerous”. It is not stating “all”.

...Speakers have explained that it is not up to the Speaker to rule on the “constitutionality” or “legality” of measures before the House.

The government House leader and government members generally would do well to spend a little more time reading *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* before venturing forth.

The following is found at page 261 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, and refers to a statement of Speaker Fraser from *Debates*, April 14, 1987:

Speaker Fraser summed the fine balancing act that is often involved in adapting old rules to new situations: “When interpreting the rules of procedure, the Speaker must take account not only of their letter but of their spirit and be guided by the most basic rule of all, that of common sense”.

I would also point to the conclusion contained in the same page in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which states:

Speakers have never shied away from creating new precedents when faced with an apparent contradiction between Standing Orders and contemporary values.

It is my submission that this is one of these instances.

I know, Mr. Speaker, you are our elected Speaker, new in the job, and this is really an opportunity for you, in looking at these precedents, to establish fair play that protects the interests of Canadians and prevents Parliament from violating its own acts that it passed at a previous time.

I would now draw the attention of the Speaker to the following, found at page 720 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition:

The enactment of a statute by Parliament is the final step in a long process that starts with the proposal, preparation and drafting of a bill. The drafting of a bill is a vital stage in this process—one which challenges the decision makers and drafters to take carefully into account certain constraints, since a failure to abide by these may have negative consequences in relation to the eventual interpretation and application of the law and to the proper functioning of the legislative process.

I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to take special note of the reference to the fact that decision-makers, in this case the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food:

...take carefully into account certain constraints, since a failure to abide by these may have negative consequences in relation to the eventual interpretation and application of the law and to the proper functioning of the legislative process.

I would also reference footnote 59 at page 721 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition. It refers to the guide to making federal acts and regulations, which is found on the Government of Canada, Privy Council office website.

In the introduction to that document, the following statement is found with respect to the law-making process:

If the process is carefully planned and competently carried out, the resulting legislation will achieve the Government's goals while adhering strictly to the principles and policies underlying our legal system.

● (1525)

Within that same document, under the section “Acts of General Application”, the following statement is found:

Those involved in the preparation of bills will take into account the requirement of explicitness so as to ensure that any political decision to exclude the operation of a presumptively applicable law is legally effective.

Finally, I would reference the following from the document under the section entitled “Legal Practises of General Application”. It states:

In addition to rules stated in Acts of general application, there are also a number of important principles that form part of the legal system. They operate in much the same way and must also be taken into account in developing legislative proposals. The following are examples of these principles:

the rules of natural justice and procedural fairness, which require that a person whose rights or interests are affected by an administrative decision be given a reasonable notice of the proposed decision and an opportunity to be heard by an unbiased decision maker;

I do not want to take too much more time but I will now turn to the issue at hand, namely, that, in the context of this legislation, my privileges have been violated due to the expectation that I will be required to engage in and cast a vote upon legislation that begins from the premise of a deliberate and overt violation of statutes passed by the House with the expectation that those provisions would be respected most of all by members of the House.

I will quote from page 140 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition. It states:

The purpose of raising matters of “privilege” in either House of Parliament is to maintain the respect and credibility due to and required of each House in respect of these privileges, to uphold [the laws of Parliament].

In his reference to the Speaker, the government House leader attempted to claim that the question of privilege I have raised has been disposed of by rulings of previous Speakers. For example, he referenced the decision of Speaker Milliken on May 13, 2003, at pages 6123 and 6124 of *Debates*. Speaker Milliken, in that decision, reminded the House that the issue before him concerned an issue of regulatory authority, stating at page 6123:

I am unable to find a case where any Speaker has ruled that a government, in the exercise of a regulatory power conferred upon it by statute, has been found to have breached the privileges of the House.

Note should be taken, though, of the fact that the matter I have raised relates not to a question of regulatory authority, but rather to the matter as to whether my privileges have been violated as a result of the government tabling legislation in direct contravention to statute passed by Parliament.

I would also note that the reference made by the government House leader to the decision of Speaker Milliken on March 13, 2005 at page 4498-4500 was in relation to an issue of government reorganization in the wake of the defeat of specific legislation. Again, my point being that the decision sought was not in relation to the matter before the House and the citation of this matter as precedent is not applicable.

I would conclude by quoting from page 262 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition. It states:

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

MARKETING FREEDOM FOR GRAIN FARMERS ACT

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC) moved that Bill C-18, An Act to reorganize the Canadian Wheat Board and to make consequential and related amendments to certain Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity on behalf of western Canadian farmers to open debate on the bill that we are putting before the House that would give them marketing freedom very similar to what farmers have been enjoying in Ontario already for some years.

The Government of Canada, under the strong leadership of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, is very proud to be leading the way toward a bright future for Canadian farmers and for the overall Canadian economy—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sure the hon. minister will want to refrain from using the name of sitting members.

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Madam Speaker, we are just so darned proud of him but I will say the Prime Minister.

We believe that all Canadian farmers should be able to position their businesses to capture the marketing opportunities that will be open to them. We live in a free country and giving farmers the freedom to choose is the right thing to do.

Currently, by law, western Canadian wheat, durum and barley growers do not have the same rights as other producers in Canada about where and how they sell their products. For export or domestic human consumption, they have no other option but to market through the Canadian Wheat Board, the monopoly that was established in 1943 by an order in council, not by producers or for producers at that time.

By allowing marketing freedom, western wheat and barley growers will be able to market based on what is best for their own bottom line of their own business. In the June 2011 Speech from the Throne, we again stated our commitment to ensure that western farmers would have the freedom to sell wheat and barley on the open market. With this proposed legislation, we would provide marketing choice to western grain farmers once and for all.

To avoid market disruption, the goal is for farmers and grain marketers, including the new entity, to be able to start forward contracting in January 2012. Farmers, grain companies and customers need this assurance. As we well know, market certainty and clarity underpins stability in the marketplace domestically and internationally.

Determining what is or is not a precedent is not always straightforward. Speaker Fraser once said that “a precedent is something that happened once upon a time and that everyone decided to follow. ... [I]n legal terms, it is usually the consequence of a decision made after argument has been proffered to the Chair ... on a certain point”. The mere occurrence of an event does not make it a precedent, and Speakers have on occasion ruled that a special circumstance justifies a deviation from a known precedent.

● (1530)

I will conclude by repeating the point I raised yesterday. I submit that to place this legislation before the House and to seek the support of the House will require members of the House to endorse legislation that begins from a premise that contravenes the existing law and, thus, places members of the House in an untenable and unacceptable position.

The Speaker: I see the hon. government House leader is rising. I do not know if I need to hear anything more, but if he feels he has something pertinent to add, I will allow him a few moments.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I will be brief, and what I say may be obvious.

The issue in question was a question of whether the Speaker should be making decisions on the constitutionality or legality of proposed legislation before the Speaker. We cited numerous decisions of Speakers' previously, precedents that indicate that should not be the practice of the Speaker. Rulings should not go in that territory.

My friend said that he would cite some precedents but then produced absolutely no precedents whatsoever that contradict that. In fact, the argument that he made was that you, Mr. Speaker, should rely on the principle that you can make new rulings, that you can carve new law or write new law on how Parliament should work.

However, he then said that that should be done under the principles of natural justice that prevail in this Parliament. If we were to follow his route, there are two fundamental principles of natural justice that would be offended. The first of those is the fettering of the discretion of this Parliament. The member is suggesting that this Parliament is now free to legislate on issues because a previous Parliament has legislated on them and, therefore, we are prohibited from legislating the same questions or, if I may, changing the laws that were made in the past. That would be fettering the discretion of this Parliament in a way that totally would offend the principles of natural justice.

The second is that his approach would result in a delegation of the ability of this Parliament to make decisions to individuals outside of this Parliament, effectively giving them the power to legislate the law of this land rather than Parliament doing so. That kind of discretion would not be legal. It would offend the principles of natural justice.

For those reasons, even on the arguments that the member put forward to you, Mr. Speaker, for why you should carve new law, the fundamental basis for them is lacking and you should not do so.

● (1535)

The Speaker: I thank hon. members for their further representations. I can assure the House I will get back to them in due course.

Government Orders

The bill would remove the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board and allow for the new Canadian wheat board to continue as a voluntary marketing organization for up to five years as it makes the transition to full private entity. During the transition period, this new voluntary organization would still be called the Canadian wheat board. It would continue to offer farmers the option of pooling their crops. It would continue to benefit from a borrowing guarantee backed by the federal government and it would develop a business plan for privatization, which will be reviewed no later than 2016.

This new freedom is not only good for farmers, it also has many economic benefits for communities across western Canada. New processing plants would be able to open their doors for business and look to hire new employees unfettered by the current ridiculous requirement to buy wheat and barley only from the Canadian Wheat Board.

Canada's grain industry is a powerhouse that brings \$16 billion to the farm gate and makes up almost half of our agricultural exports. What was once Canada's signature crop, hard red spring wheat, has fallen behind. Wheat and barley innovation has become stagnate. Competition for acres has weakened and newer crops, such as canola, have surpassed wheat in value.

A C.D. Howe report released this past spring confirmed that Canada's share of annual worldwide wheat production has fallen by 50% in the last 50 years. It is a staggering number. Equally, Canadian market share and world barley exports have declined by 40% since the 1980s. With the reduced market share, the Canadian Wheat Board has less influence on the world stage and, as a result, has become a price taker.

We have seen tremendous growth in value added opportunities across the Prairies over the past 20 years for crops that do not have a monopoly marketer, including oats, pulses, flax and, of course, canola. We would see these same opportunities open up for wheat and barley as we implement market freedom. We will work with farmers and industry to attract investment, encourage innovation, create value added jobs and build an overall stronger economy.

Our government has promised western Canadian wheat and barley growers that they will be given marketing freedom. We are fulfilling that commitment and ensuring that the market is finally controlled by the experts in the grain industry, our farmers.

The Canadian Wheat Board was first imposed on western Canadian farmers when times were different, to say the very least, difficult. Canadians had just gone through the Great Depression, World War II was raging and Canada was committed to supplying wheat to Britain. It was 1943 when farmers were forced to sell through the board. It was done with the aim of aiding the war effort, not with any pretense that it would be good for farmers.

So what has changed since then? Just about everything down on the farm.

For starters, it is now 2011, not 1943. Our government remains focused on economic stability and creating the right conditions for more long-term jobs and stronger economic growth, all the while steadily eliminating the deficit and returning to surplus. Our workforce is healthy and our agricultural industry is helping to drive our economy.

Unfortunately, the one thing that has not changed is that prairie farmers are still forced by law to sell their wheat, durum and barley through the Canadian Wheat Board.

The government's position is clear: our long-standing commitment that we are now delivering on is to promise and provide marketing choice. This is why we want to continue to have the Canadian Wheat Board in place as a choice for those who want to continue marketing through the board.

• (1540)

For too long, barley and durum processors have been setting up shop south of the border because they could not take the red tape here in Canada.

Those who are looking for an economic analysis need only listen to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce when it says:

The current single-desk model restricts valued added investment in wheat and barley, significantly detracting the ability of farmers and industry to respond to market demands and earn a premium return in recognition of the innovation provided, including innovation in value-added processing.

That is quite a statement.

Look at what happened to oats when it came out from under the monopoly. In Manitoba alone the acreage of oats has increased by over 250,000 acres since its removal from the Wheat Board's control.

This has allowed for the opening and expansion of Can-oat, a processing mill in Portage La Prairie. A half a million tonnes a year of oats run through that facility. These are the types of value-added industries and jobs that exist when farmers have the option to market their products as they so choose.

The transition to marketing freedom will have an impact on the Port of Churchill, since the CWB was responsible for nearly 90% of all goods shipped through the port in 2010. Our government is taking concrete steps to help ensure the Port of Churchill will remain a viable option for exports.

The Government of Canada remains committed to Churchill, and we understand the importance of economic development and diversification to the community, the region and the overall north.

The government also acknowledges that the changes to the Canadian Wheat Board, while giving farmers marketing freedom, will also lead to a period of adjustment for Churchill and the surrounding region. That is why we are taking necessary steps to support the community and the port through this transition.

The government will provide an economic incentive of up to \$5 million per year during the five year transition period to support shipments of grain, including now oil seeds, pulses and special crops through the port.

Government Orders

Working with the port owner, Transport Canada will invest more than \$4 million to repair the existing port assets and support the safe docking of vessels. This will also enable the port to remain in sound operating condition to take advantage of future business opportunities, and could create jobs resulting in economic benefits to the community over the next three years.

Western Economic Diversification Canada will work with the Churchill Gateway Development Corporation on port infrastructure improvements, and extend the project completion date an additional two years, from 2013 to 2015. Additionally, the government will continue to explore initiatives to support the ongoing operations of the port.

We recognize that this is a major change for agriculture in western Canada. That is why we have been consulting extensively with stakeholders from across the supply chain, from the farm gate to seaport.

Over the summer, a working group comprising experts in the field heard a broad range of advice on how the grain marketing and transportation system could transition from the current CWB-run system to an open market that includes voluntary marketing pools.

The working group's report covers a wide range of issues from transportation to research to elevators, basically the how of moving to an open market. The basic thrust is to let markets work, but monitor them to ensure that effective competition prevails. The working group is one of many ways the government is seeking advice on how to move forward.

One of its recommendation deals with the issue of the advance payments program. This is a very popular tool farmers use to maintain their cash flow during the production season. The APP has always been delivered on behalf of Agriculture Canada by delivery agents. In order for the new CWB to focus 100% on the marketing of grain for those farmers who choose to use it, the Canadian Canola Grower Association will now administer the APP for wheat and barley, starting with the spring 2012 advance program. Canadian canola growers have great expertise and 30 years experience in administering these cash advances.

As a result of the change, many farmers will have their administrative burden reduced as they deal with fewer organizations, not to mention a potential reduction in their administration fee. Wheat and barley farmers will continue to have access to this program without disruption.

Canada's wheat and barley producers constantly adapt their operations to the evolving economic and weather realities, and their ability to secure cash flows is an essential part of their ongoing business decisions. Our government is taking clear and concise action so that wheat and barley farmers will continue to have access to the advance payments program during and after this transition to an open market.

With regard to the issue of producer cars, the reality is that the board's monopoly has never provided producer cars. The right to producer cars is set out in the Canada Grain Act, and producer cars have always been allocated by the Canadian Grain Commission, and the Wheat Board's only role was to charge a fee for the use of a

producer car. Our government will continue to protect farmers' access to them.

Similarly, the fact is that short line railways and farmer-owned inland terminals succeed in their businesses on the basis of their management skills and the value they offer producers. They will continue to offer savings to farmers without the CWB monopoly. To suggest that they depend on a monopoly, forcing farmers to deal with them, is an insult to the people who operate these businesses.

These same groups offer professional and economically beneficial services to producers for non-board crops now, and they are doing very well at it.

● (1545)

The government is committed to improving rail service for agricultural shippers. The government completed the rail service review and we announced our follow-up actions in the spring of last year.

As for jobs, while the board will see some job losses initially, the future for employment in the grains sectors looks bright. We can expect more processors to start up new businesses in western Canada. Private marketers of wheat and barley will expand their workforces. The Western Grain Elevator Association members are already calling for and interviewing people to handle the increase it expects. Some have even committed to numbers that they will require in this new free setting.

Milling firms will be able to purchase directly from the farmer of their choice at a price and a timeframe they negotiate. Entrepreneurs will have the option of starting up their own specialty flour mills, malting and pasta plants. In fact, just recently, we had the honour of turning the sod on a new pasta plant in Regina. Murad Al-Katib of Alliance Grain Traders, born and raised in Davidson, Saskatchewan, has been selling Canadian pulses worldwide. The company also manufactures pasta in Turkey, but has stayed out of the Canadian market because of the monopoly and all the red tape involved in dealing directly with durum producers. This is a \$50 million private sector investment that will create 60 permanent jobs and 200 construction jobs. He is unequivocal in saying that this would not happen without these changes. That is great news for Saskatchewan and it is great news for farmers overall. I know that there are more to come.

Government Orders

My colleagues on the opposite side of the floor unfortunately remain steadfast against these opportunities of an open market. Even more amazing about this opposition is that only a tiny fraction of their members represent anyone in the Wheat Board area. All of them are from city ridings. The official agriculture critics, both from Ontario, seem to think that they have the right to tell western grain farmers that they do not have the right to market their own wheat and barley as their own constituents do.

In the Ontario example, we made the announcement yesterday at Don Kenny of Blondehead Farms. He is the chair of the Ontario grain producers. We also had in attendance, Barry Senft, who is the president and CEO of the Ontario wheat board. They both recommend this change. They did it in 2003 and have never looked back.

My colleagues understand we are turning a page in our nation's great history and we will all be better for it. Exciting new opportunities lie ahead for our grain industry. The government is pleased to receive the support of this initiative from three of the four provinces shackled by the monopoly. Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia produce over 90% of western Canada's wheat, durum and barley.

The agriculture minister from Saskatchewan said:

Saskatchewan farmers spend their own hard-earned money on land, machinery and inputs to grow their own crops, so why shouldn't they have the marketing freedom to decide how, when, and to whom they sell their grain?

Alberta's agriculture and rural development minister said:

Marketing opportunities are being lost every day and it's vital that Alberta's grain producers be able to market their product to anyone they choose.

As well, the agriculture minister for British Columbia said:

Every farmer in Western Canada deserves the right to sell their grain when, to whom and for the price that works best for their farm business.

The government is giving western Canadian farmers nothing more than their right to manage their own businesses their own way. While we welcome constructive debate, frivolous delays will only hurt our farmers and the overall grain industry.

We owe it to producers to provide market certainty so they can continue to plan their businesses. Farmers must plan for the 2012-2013 year. They are already putting inputs in the ground, getting ready. When they are making seeding decisions they will want to know what the marketing system will be for that 2012 crop.

Canada will continue to sell wheat and barley and maintain its reputation as a quality, reliable supplier. The international grain trade works largely on forward contracting for future purchases and sales. If there is uncertainty in the market about the rules of who can sell Canadian wheat and barley, there is a high risk that buyers will turn to other countries to buy that wheat and barley.

The Canadian wheat and barley sector can continue to supply domestic and world markets with high quality wheat and barley, but they look to us to provide the certainty they need to plan and carry out their business decisions.

I invite my colleagues in the House to join us as we work to ensure that all farmers across Canada can position their businesses to capture the opportunities of the future.

● (1550)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a number of questions for the minister because there has been such a preponderance of misinformation circulated by him and his office that some of it begs for clarity in this brief opportunity we have to debate this staggeringly complicated change he is making to the rural prairie economy.

First, I would like to ask the minister if he would clarify what he meant yesterday when he said that he has never seen a report from the CWB. At least on television he would have the public believe that the Canadian Wheat Board would not submit reports to the minister, as it is required to do. I know that I have seen the reports and I wonder why the minister has not or if he wants to correct the statement that he made.

Second, I know that when legislation goes through the process of development, a cost analysis is done to any piece of legislation, no matter what it is, and presented to the Treasury Board. We have never seen any cost benefit analysis of this piece of legislation. He owes it to Parliament and the general public to take this opportunity to tell us the cost implications.

Finally, in the same vein of costing, we have seen a private independent estimate by Peat Marwick that it would cost as much as \$500 million in closing costs to terminate the CWB. A \$6 billion a year corporation does not just disappear without significant closing costs. Contracts may be terminated and the contracts for ships that are being partly built may be terminated.

Will he tell us the government's estimate? What is it going to cost the government to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board? I would like answers to the other two questions as well.

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Madam Speaker, I stand behind my statement that I have never seen the reports that I have asked for from the Canadian Wheat Board. It is supposed to, on a monthly basis, report to the minister of the day on what it has sold, who it has sold it to, the value of the sale, the shipping, and all of the transactions. I have never seen those. It does not seem to be able to provide those in a way that says it is getting a premium price. I have never seen those. Maybe the member opposite has an inside track, being the eager beaver that he is, but I have never seen them.

As to cost analysis, the member opposite talked about misinformation and that it has to be presented, and that type of thing. Farmers have done the cost analysis for years. As I said in my opening remarks, we have lost 50% of our wheat and 40% of our barley. What is the cost of that loss out there on the world market?

Government Orders

The one good thing the board has done in its intransigence is allowed for world-class canola, mustard, flax and oats. All the other commodities outside of the board have flourished. We are seeing processing, global demand increase and new varieties being developed. There is a great cost benefit in that the board not moving as it should has benefited the other sectors, to the point where now canola is king on the Prairies and will continue to be. We have crushing facilities. The misnomer that one cannot process at point of production and it has to be done at point of sale is put to the lie by the canola crushers that are popping up across the Prairies. We are also seeing the durum plant going in Regina. I know the member for Wascana will be celebrating that because a lot of those people live in his riding.

The member talked about the study that was done. It was KPMG, actually, and not Peat Marwick. The numbers I have seen on that one are so staggering in scope as to be unbelievable in the spread on some of them. He talked about the ships. There was no consultation with farmers on that. They are scooping money out of the farm pools without even asking farmers if they can do it. That is ridiculous. That is one of the reasons farmers have moved away.

● (1555)

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have two questions for the minister, but I would first request that he resist belittling the efforts of urban members of Parliament who know where their food comes from. We know that food comes from farmers and we are here defending the well-being of western Canadian farmers.

My two questions are as follows, very quickly. We know that he does not respect the opinion of opposition members and we know he does not respect the opinion of farmers who have expressed it in a plebiscite. Would he respect an objective opinion from *The Economist* magazine that said recently:

Smaller producers, faced with mounting marketing costs, will inevitably have to sell their farms to bigger rivals or agribusiness companies...devastating small prairie towns, whose economies depend on individual farmers with disposable income.

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Madam Speaker, what I find to be hypocritical is that the member from Ontario, and good for him that he was elected, wants to deny my farmers the same rights and privileges that his farmers enjoy now. How can he stand in his place and do that? This is about fairness.

When he talks about the smaller producers who are in jeopardy, I make the argument that they will be in jeopardy if we continue down this line. These same small producers have become experts at marketing their canola, mustard, oats and flax. They have moved to other commodities. Certainly, they grow wheat because in the west we are using a zero-till process and need good rotational crops to fight the weed systems, chemicals and the like that are in the soil. That is great. However, we are not using wheat, durum and barley to the same extent that we used to. Now we are using triticale, canaryseed and many other products to fill the gap because of the intransigence and the changes that have not been allowed regarding the western Canadian Wheat Board. That is one of the reasons we are moving.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is obviously a great day for Canadian farmers. I am so excited. I want to thank the minister and the parliamentary secretary for all of

their hard work. On this day I think of men like Rick Strankman, Jim Ness and the late Art Walde and all the battles they have fought.

Would the minister explain what options and opportunities the farmers will have once the legislation is passed?

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Madam Speaker, like me, the member's background is in agriculture and his heart and passion are still there.

This issue is what has brought many of us to the floor of the House of Commons to ensure that we move forward.

Art Walde, whose name the member mentioned, was a good friend of mine. I attended Art's funeral. This was Art's lifeblood. His family insisted that I continue on with this fight and move forward on this issue to ensure that his son who is now farming would have the opportunity to run his own business in his own way and sell his own commodities.

We will get that done.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I heard the minister in the House and in the media last night say that the government is speaking for Canadians and Canadian farmers.

What I find puzzling is that when I spoke to the prairie agricultural associations, I heard something different. For example, the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan is dead set against shutting down the Wheat Board and is absolutely appalled that the government did not uphold the majority vote of farmers. It stated:

Producers have now sent a very clear message to government....So if government chooses to ignore the message and we do see the loss of the single desk, we're concerned about the transitional issues that will result.

The Wild Rose Agricultural Producers of Alberta, Alberta's largest producer-funded general farm organization, is expressing strong opposition to shutting down the Wheat Board. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture is expressing strong opposition to the shutting down of the Wheat Board. The National Farmers Union, which has been in existence for many years in this country, is opposing this move by the government.

Who exactly is the government representing?

● (1600)

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate the member has not broadened that scope to the real farmers in western Canada. The western wheat and barley growers, the Grain Growers of Canada and the Canadian Cattlemen's Association all support this initiative that we are moving forward on. As I outlined in my remarks earlier, so do the provincial governments, such as British Columbia because of the Peace River area, Alberta and Saskatchewan, where 85% to 90% of the Canadian Wheat Board commodities are grown.

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Manitoba is against it. That is because of the NDP philosophy that we should all be locked into mediocrity; nobody moves, nobody gets hurt.

We are beyond that. These farmers know how to run their businesses. They are looking forward to their marketing freedom. We will get it done.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the House for this opportunity to speak at second reading of Bill C-18.

The bill is a mistake in the making. We are watching a terrible economic mistake unfold before our very eyes. I must admit that there is a feeling of helplessness on this side because the Conservatives have chosen to use their majority to ram this change through to the rural prairie economic base without even consulting with farmers or allowing them the vote that they are guaranteed through legislation.

I preface my remarks by correcting one thing. The minister would have us believe that the May 2, 2011 general election was a referendum on the future of the Wheat Board. He would also have us believe that by virtue of the fact that the election was won by a majority it satisfies the condition of the Wheat Board legislation that guarantees farmers the right to vote on the future of the Wheat Board. I categorically reject that point of view.

I received telephone calls from prairie farmers in Saskatchewan and Manitoba who told me they had voted Conservative because of some other aspect they liked about the Conservative Party platform, which is their right to do. They also said that just because they elected that government it did not give the Conservatives the right to abolish the Wheat Board. They had understood that through the legislation they had been promised an opportunity to vote on it.

The minister has denied farmers the right to vote on how they would market their grain in the future. Therefore, when the minister stands and says he is giving farmers more marketing choice, if he is serious about letting farmers choose how to market their grain, why in God's name will he not let them vote on the issue? It is their democratic right.

If the minister is confident and believes his own rhetoric that the world would be a better place for farmers if they did away with the single desk monopoly of the Wheat Board, then why will he not put it to farmers for a vote? He claims he has the support of the majority of farmers on this issue. Why is he afraid of putting it to a democratic vote?

There has only been one genuine consultation with farmers on this issue. In the absence of a vote being sponsored by the government, the Canadian Wheat Board hired an independent third party and undertook a properly constructed vote using a fair question and fair methodology. As a result, 22,000 Canadian prairie grain farmers voted in favour of keeping the single desk monopoly. That is 62% of prairie grain producers. I was disappointed as I thought the numbers would be higher. We had estimated that about 75% of prairie grain producers supported the single desk monopoly. Nonetheless, 62% is a clear majority on that question.

There is no other form of consultation that is fair. The minister said that when he goes home and talks to farmers they tell him that

they want to get rid of the Wheat Board. That does not constitute a scientific survey of the opinions of prairie farmers.

There is no business case for abolishing the Canadian Wheat Board. If there were it would have been tabled in the House along with the legislation. We are dealing with a notion here. We are dealing with the personal opinion of the Minister of Agriculture, who believes that we should abolish the single desk monopoly. I have empirical evidence to show that his view is that of the minority.

I also have well-documented and independently analyzed empirical evidence which shows that the Canadian Wheat Board has provided the best possible price for Canadian farmers year after year. As well, it has minimized their risks. It has provided both of those functions and many others which I will discuss if time permits.

The minister talked about offering farmers certainty, stability and clarity over the next farming year. In actual fact he is being reckless and irresponsible. At a time of economic uncertainty within the country, he is turning the rural prairie economy upside down on its head. There is no guarantee or certainty that the next farming year will provide a stable marketplace for grain farmers' products. There would be no underwriting and guarantees which are presently associated with the Wheat Board on pricing, on shipping capacity and on marketing capacity. All of that is now up in the air.

● (1605)

The minister would have us believe that farmers were better off in the 1920s when they were being gouged by the robber barons and the railway barons. The very reason farmers pooled together to act collectively was to protect themselves from the abuse of the powers that be, those people who held power over the farmers. That is how the Wheat Board evolved. That is how it graduated to being the largest and most successful grain marketing company in the world. It is a great Canadian institution wholly owned and operated by Canadian farmers. It is a brilliant concept.

It works so well that it irritates the heck out of our American neighbours. For years they have been trying to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board because they know it is a huge advantage for Canadian farmers, so much so that they claim it constitutes an unfair trading subsidy and violates international trade agreements. The U.S. filed 13 separate complaints first with the GATT and then with its successor the WTO. The WTO ruled 13 times that there is nothing unfair about Canadian farmers acting collectively to sell their products and look out for their own interests by commanding the best possible prices.

It is hard enough being a farmer with the droughts, floods, pestilence and all the other challenges farmers face. That is now coupled with the economic uncertainty of the 2011 Canadian economy. It boggles my mind that the minister would follow his own ideology, in spite of the empirical evidence to the contrary, and would throw this spanner into the economy of the three prairie provinces.

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It worries me when ideology trumps reason, logic, economics, research and empirical evidence. It is a terrible thing to be setting policy by the notions of a failed ostrich rider. The man does not speak from any authority as a grain farmer; he raises ostriches in North Battleford. He criticizes my colleague for being from the good city of Guelph. He criticizes me for living in the good city of Winnipeg. Only he is being driven by this notion, which is a weak notion at that.

There is a great deal of collateral damage associated with the dismantling of the Canadian Wheat Board. The downtown area of Winnipeg that I represent has become the world centre of excellence for grain. That is not only because of its marketing capacity. It is a \$6 billion a year corporation, the head office of which is in my riding. It ships 20 million tonnes of class A, the best grain in the world, from Canada.

It has also created the Canadian International Grains Institute, a satellite campus of grain excellence that does research and development funded by the Canadian Wheat Board. It develops and customizes new strains and product lines to fit the markets where the Wheat Board promotes our grain. The Canadian Grain Commission sets the grain quality standards so that we can continue to enjoy our reputation for having the highest quality grain in the world.

All of that will be lost. We will no longer be the centre of excellence. The big grain companies and private grain companies came Winnipeg because it is the centre of excellence and set up their headquarters next to the Canadian Wheat Board. They will no longer need to keep their head offices in Canada once the Wheat Board disappears, which it will because this notion of a voluntary wheat board with dual marketing is a pure chimera. It is a myth.

As a diversion, I will tell the House why it is plainly a myth. If the initial price for grain offered by a voluntary wheat board was higher than the market price there would be no orders. People would go to the market for grain. If the initial price offered was lower than the market price, it would have all of the orders but would have to sell the grain at a loss. That is a recipe for bankruptcy. It is exactly what happened in Australia.

● (1610)

When Johnny Howard, our Prime Minister's Australian counterpart, had the same brain fart of an idea that the Australian wheat board should be privatized. It lasted exactly three years as a voluntary board once its monopoly was taken away and it went bankrupt. Sure enough, that market share went into the hands of the private grain companies, the multinational agrifood businesses, which wanted to control the food supply system from seed to final retail production. They wanted it all. Believe me, they have been salivating over this market segment for 75 years.

The Conservative government is going to do the Americans' dirty work for them and hand them that market share on a silver platter, without any consideration of the best interests of the very grain producers who it is duty bound and honour bound to represent. It is amazing that the Canadian Wheat Board should finally crash because it has been sabotaged by the minister, a rat in the woodpile. The minister is undermining the very institution that he is honour bound by his office to uphold and be the champion of. He is not

supposed to be the saboteur of the Wheat Board; he is supposed to be the champion of the Wheat Board. There is an enemy within. The Canadian farmers have elected an enemy.

The implications are profound for the prairie economy if the Canadian Wheat Board disappears.

I will dwell briefly on the economic impact just for the city of Winnipeg, because it is the area I represent. A Pricewaterhouse-Coopers study in 2005 estimated the gross output of the CWB impact in Winnipeg at \$94.6 million. There are 400 employees in its head office. The spin-off employment of the CWB is estimated at more than 2,000 jobs. At the provincial level, the CWB gross output contribution is another \$323 million, with more than 3,000 jobs of a total labour-income impact of more than \$140 million. I cannot tell the members how frustrated we are.

I would like to deal with some of the corresponding collateral damage, as I am calling it. For the Port of Churchill, the minister has now come up with \$5 million a year for five years to offset the impact on the Port of Churchill. I read that as an acknowledgement that the Wheat Board no longer shipping its grain through Churchill would have a profound impact. However, it begs the question of why he is so eager to abolish the Canadian Wheat Board when it will cost him a minimum of \$25 million in impacts that the government otherwise would not have to shell out. It is money it does not have, I might had. It has to borrow every penny that it shovels into this.

As to the closing costs, I asked the minister this question. What would it cost to shut down a \$6 billion a year corporation, the most successful and largest grain marketing company in the world? KPMG, an independent authority, estimated as much as \$500 million. It would have to pay severance to all the employees. It would have to deal with contracts that had been signed for the delivery of grain, that now would be broken. It would have to dismantle overseas marketing offices.

The average layperson does not understand the marketing network we have established here. It is magnificent and that is why it is so successful. Now the government will borrow \$500 million on the open market. I do not know where that kind of money is borrowed from these days. That is just to fulfill this free market flight of fancy of that minister who got into politics specifically to abolish the Canadian Wheat Board.

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I remember when he was the assistant to Elwin Hermanson, whom the Conservatives have happily put in charge of the grain commission, again, infiltrating these organizations to destroy them and collapse them from within. The minister has breathed, eaten and slept abolishing the Canadian Wheat Board ever since he came to Ottawa. Now, in spite of reason, logic, economics and empirical evidence, he is hell-bound and determined to do the dirty deed and abolish what we believe is a great Canadian institution.

●(1615)

It would not be paranoid to presume that this is part of a pattern. Every time there is a trade advantage to Canada, those guys feel compelled to sacrifice it and give it up, such as the softwood lumber agreement. When the Americans came breathing down our necks telling us we were enjoying far too much advantage in that industry, we forfeited.

When it comes to the Wheat Board and when it becomes evident that we do it better, what do we do? We give it up and forfeit it. We yield to the bullies in an international trade situation and give up our advantage.

We do not have champions here; we have cowards in giving up so readily, and again, driven by ideology and not by anything else.

As I close, I would like to move an amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

"this House declines to give second reading to Bill C-18, an act to reorganize the Canadian Wheat Board and to make consequential and related amendments to certain acts, because it:

(a) fails to respect the will of the majority of prairie farmers who have expressed a desire to maintain the current composition and structure of the Canadian Wheat Board;

(b) ignores the fact that the Canadian Wheat Board is funded, controlled, and directed by Canadian farmers and removes their autonomy to maximize prices and minimize risks in the western wheat and barley market; and

(c) makes sweeping decisions on behalf of prairie farmers by eliminating the single-desk system that has provided prairie farmers with strength and stability for nearly 70 years.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Guelph.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food for three years now and wheat farmers have been before the committee on many occasions. We continually ask them, in their opinion, why manufacturers have not begun to build pasta plants out west. They say, almost unanimously, that they do not want to do this because of the distance from their markets, not because of the Canadian Wheat Board.

However, now that the Wheat Board is on its deathbed, they have said, through the Alliance Grain Traders Inc., only now will they open a pasta plant in Saskatchewan. In one of its reports it said, "Margin erosion is combated by negotiating lower prices from growers".

Does the member believe the plant will go in there now because it knows it will pay less for its grain, and it will be at the expense of Canadian farmers? What delusion is the minister under to think farmers are going to do better by getting rid of the Wheat Board?

●(1620)

Mr. Pat Martin: Madam Speaker, studies have indicated that abolishing the Canadian Wheat Board would take hundreds of millions of dollars out of the pockets of prairie producers and put them into the pockets of the shareholders of the private grain companies. People should remember that the Canadian Wheat Board is a non-profit organization. It is not even allowed to retain assets or income. All returns have to be returned to the producer. The profit margin will go to the big grain companies. In the case of this new pasta plant, it is salivating. It anticipates it will be able to get its grain cheaper, which means farmers will earn less.

While I am on my feet, let me also deal with an issue that the minister raised. He said that the only reason the pasta plant was being built was because the product would be value-added and that would happen more. In actual fact, in western Canada milling capacity has increased 11% from 2001 to 2011 and four new mills have been built in western Canada in 2011 compared to 10 years ago. Four new mills happened under the current situation, whereas in North Dakota there was not one new mill. In fact, the number of mills remained static.

Entrepreneurs could in fact add value to the raw product in Canada under the current system. The fact that they did not may be due to many reasons. However, the minister is misleading Canadians if he is saying that this is going to be a free market nirvana now and all of these mills are going to sprout out of the ground like mushrooms. It simply is not true.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the disadvantages both members opposite have is coming late to the discussion. I guess neither of them is aware of the failures of the pasta plant projects that tried to take place in western Canada, but were shut down because the Wheat Board would not allow producers to even use their own grain. It would not allow them to sell to the producers. I guess the member opposite did not know that.

We certainly would welcome a new pasta plant there. According to the logic of the Liberals, it would seem that we should shut down every factory in Canada if we want to protect the prices of our natural resources, which is ridiculous. I do not know where they are coming from in even making a suggestion like that.

I want to ask the member one thing. I talked to some Winnipeg-based businesses that do marketing for farmers in some of the specialty crops. They told me they had around 1,000 customers right now and they were absolutely thrilled that they would have the opportunity. They said that the problem for them would be accessing enough employees to do the work when moving from 1,000 to potentially 15,000 customers.

Why is he not prepared to support the Winnipeg businesses that really see this as an opportunity?

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Mr. Pat Martin: Madam Speaker, it gives me an opportunity to answer the question that the member should have asked, which is, What is going to happen to Canadian wheat as a commodity? I can answer that question for him. Canadian wheat, which has a reputation around the world as the highest quality and maintained as such by the work of the Canadian Wheat Board and its quality control, will be lost as a Canadian commodity because it will be blended.

When the big agrifood and grain companies take over and we sell our number one grade, fine quality Canadian wheat, it will be mixed with some substandard wheat from somewhere else in the United States and will be sold offshore that way. Our customers are going to lose their confidence in the Canadian product if we cannot maintain the highest standards that we currently enjoy and the reputation that we earned stemming from that.

• (1625)

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Madam Speaker, last night some of us were here in a debate trying to support democracy in Ukraine. It seems ironic that we are now witnessing the erosion of democracy in our own country.

I have before me a communiqué from the Canadian Wheat Board Alliance, a non-partisan group, in support of the Canadian Wheat Board. It stated:

At a widely quoted election forum in Minnedosa, Manitoba, [the minister] said his party “respects the vote” of farmers who support the single desk and suggested there would not be any attempt to dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board unless a majority of producers vote for it.

He went on to say:

—until farmers make that change, I’m not prepared to work arbitrarily. They are absolutely right to believe in democracy. I do, too.

This was during the election. We get the spin that somehow, because many people voted for the Conservatives on the Prairies, this is the mandate. What about the fact that farmers are only 2% of the population spread over 57 western ridings? Claiming the Conservative Party has a mandate from farmers to change the Wheat Board is ridiculous. Most urban voters agree that farmers should decide this issue.

Would my colleague please comment on this?

Mr. Pat Martin: Madam Speaker, if we take the Conservatives at their word that they want to give more marketing choice to farmers, why do they not let them vote on it as the legislation demands and as the minister promised farmers?

He is being disingenuous, which perhaps is too kind a word, when he says that all western farmers want to do away with the Canadian Wheat Board. He certainly was disingenuous with the people of that area, saying, “Go ahead and vote Conservative. It does not mean it is a referendum on the Wheat Board”. Then he stood up on May 2 and said that he got a referendum on the Wheat Board.

The only way to test the merits of the argument of the Conservatives is to put it to farmers and let them decide.

If, on a fair question and a democratic vote, farmers say they want to do away with the Wheat Board even by 51%, the government will not hear another word from me or my colleagues in the NDP. We

would respect the democratic will of farmers, not ignore it and insult it the way the government has.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, this past summer supposedly the board sent out a plebiscite and it said it had 22,000 supporters. Would the hon. member tell me why it did not sign up acres in the 22,000 supporters? Could he explain to me why there is accredited exporters here in Ottawa saying they cannot source grain?

Why can the board not do both? Why can it not offer the grain from these 22,000 supporters to the people who are already marketing that grain on their behalf?

Mr. Pat Martin: Madam Speaker, I do not think my colleague should challenge the merits or the veracity of the plebiscite that took place. It was done by an independent third party. I am trying to remember if it was KPMG or PricewaterhouseCoopers. It was a clear question, a fair question. We did not need any Clarity Act on the question: “Do you want to maintain the single desk monopoly?” A clear majority of farmers voted to keep it.

We have to respect that. If one calls oneself a democrat, one has to respect the democratic will of people as clearly expressed in a fair and honest vote.

The Conservatives may be unwilling to uphold their obligation to farmers to conduct a vote as per the legislation, but the Canadian Wheat Board had one and the results were clear. We have to respect that. It is all about respect.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives have misrepresented in the House when they said that Ontario farmers had a choice. Ontario farmers were given a vote. Their markets were completely different. There is a much smaller market into the United States as opposed to the massive distances covered by prairie farmers.

Why is it the hon. member thinks that the government is opposed to allowing farmers the right to vote?

Mr. Pat Martin: Madam Speaker, let me reiterate that if there were such a vote and the prairie farmers voted even by 51% or 50% plus one, that would be the last the House would hear about it from us.

If the farmers of Ontario voted to do away with the marketing system they had, that is their business; that is their right, just as it should be the right of prairie farmers to make that choice. It should not be arbitrarily imposed by a bunch of ideological zealots.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before resuming debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona, Aboriginal Affairs.

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[English]

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we should not even be debating Bill C-18 today. Alongside tens of thousands of western Canadian farmers, members on this side of the House await the plebiscite the Conservative government is legally required to hold under section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act before it can apply its ideological scalpel to a Canadian institution that has been the backbone of grain farming across the Prairies for decades.

Nevertheless, if we have learned anything from the behaviour of the government in the early days of this Parliament, it is that its ministers are rolling out the greatest hits of the Reform Party. Throwing caution to the wind, it is stifling debate as much as possible and taking the rest of Canada along with it no matter who it negatively impacts.

Neither the Prime Minister nor the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has ever made much of a secret of their single-minded desire for the death of the single desk system. What they have kept from enquiring Canadians are the reasons they refuse to hold a plebiscite of the Wheat Board membership, or even why in March, heading into an election, the minister assured farmers that there was no reason to worry and that their opinions would be sought on the Wheat Board when it came forward in this Parliament.

Once it became clear that the minister had no intention of honouring his March pledge, the Canadian Wheat Board held its own plebiscite on the continued operation of the single desk under the Canadian Wheat Board. The results were clear. The majority of western Canadian grain farmers chose the stability, competitive advantage and clout, not just in Canada but overseas, that it enjoys due to its numbers brought together under a single desk.

In August 68,000 ballots were mailed out to farmers. Over the course of that month meetings were held across the Prairies and hundreds of farmers came in off the fields for meetings as harvest began simply to ensure their voices were heard. Farmers for both sides attended these meetings. They listened respectfully and made their points as to why they believed it should go or why it should stay.

I attended several of these meetings and was astonished, as were the organizers. Never before had they held a single meeting where over 500 farmers attended, such as the one in Saskatoon in early August. I set out to listen to the different viewpoints of various farmers and at one meeting was pulled aside by one farmer from the Saskatoon area. He said to me, and I will paraphrase because he used much more colourful language, "I haven't voted Liberal in the last thousand years and it's unlikely that I will in the next thousand years, but I certainly did not vote Conservative so that they could kill the Canadian Wheat Board".

I may not have changed his vote, but what he wanted to ensure was that someone in Ottawa was listening to him. Sadly, he could not go to his own MP because just when farmers are asking them to listen and represent the farmers' best interests, Conservative MPs are nowhere to be seen or heard. Not one. Not one single Conservative prairie MP has the courage to stand up and defend the rights of his or her constituents to hold a government-conducted plebiscite as mandated by section 47.1 of the act.

The Conservative Party only received 24% of eligible Canadian votes, which certainly does not constitute a mandate to run roughshod over the democratic rights of farmers to maintain their livelihoods under the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

Desperate to have their voices heard, farmers held their own plebiscite. The results of the plebiscite were unambiguous with a 56% response rate, a number similar to the turnout in many recent general elections and byelections, including in the minister's own riding. Sixty-two per cent of wheat producers and 51% of barley producers voted to retain their single-desk marketing and sales arm under the Canadian Wheat Board.

Regrettably, the minister simply dismissed the results as an expensive survey. Unfortunately, Canadians do not have the same opportunity to dismiss their muzzled prairie MPs' own election results similarly.

Many argue that with the fragile state of the world economy, the CWB is more important than ever before for the grain-exporting prairie provinces. The livelihoods of Canadian farmers and small businesses are at stake.

● (1635)

Recently even *The Economist* wrote that, concerned about the death of the single desk marketing system:

Smaller producers, faced with mounting marketing costs, will inevitably have to sell their farms to bigger rivals or agribusiness companies....devastating small prairie towns, whose economies depend on individual farmers with disposable income.

I have heard from farmers, even some who favour killing the Wheat Board, that thousands of farms managed by farmers whose age exceeds the average age of farmers in Canada, which is 58 years, are likely to close. With their closure so too will the small town and village economies supported by those farmers suffer. We risk seeing an end to a number of small towns in rural parts of our prairie provinces.

The board markets and sells on behalf of every wheat and grain producer in the Prairies to some 70 countries and 100 buyers across the world. Its unique position allows it to act as a price setter instead of a price taker.

In contrast to *The Economist*, the *Wall Street Journal* welcomed the impending demise of the Canadian Wheat Board noting, "more money goes back to farmers than under an open-market system," the open market system that the government is proposing. It went on to say:

Grain handlers such as Cargill Inc., Viterra Inc. and Bunge Ltd. could see their roles—and returns—in Canadian grain markets grow.

At whose expense? No one else other than our prairie wheat farmers. Recently in a report from Alliance Grain Traders Inc., which is conveniently only now opening a pasta plant in Saskatchewan, said its "margin erosion is combatted by negotiating lower prices from growers".

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From my time on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, I have learned that a major reason that pasta manufacturing has not been meaningfully undertaken in the west is it is too far distant from a market that would consume its products and transportation costs would be too great.

Now that the Canadian Wheat Board will be abolished, there is the opportunity to get the lowest possible price for grain from farmers who are no longer able to set the best possible price that will allow pasta manufacturers to offset the transportation costs of marketing their pasta, again at the expense of western Canadian farmers.

What is clear is that the protection of the family farm in the prairie provinces is not a priority under the Conservative government. It would prefer to create an environment that would see farmers fail than support an environment that protects the way of life for multitudes of farmers and their families whose way of life will be dramatically changed and not for the better.

For whom will they be changed? For the well-being of large agribusiness and foreign interests. Without the Canadian Wheat Board which returns excess profits to the pockets of farmers, the larger rail and grain companies that can sustain their own networks will finally have access to those farmers' profits. Their interest is not the well-being of farmers, but rather their own bottom line. Farmers will be left to bid one another down to the lowest possible price to sell their grain.

We know not only from studies but intuitively that farmers will fall prey to the gluttonous appetites for profit of grain companies and the railways, appetites that have been held in check by a steady diet controlled by the Canadian Wheat Board. In the wake of the minister's pronouncements on the death of the CWB a month ago, shares in Viterra dramatically spiked.

Moreover, there have been no assurances made by the government regarding Canadian food sovereignty. It is one thing that small family farms will be bought up by massive agribusiness; it is entirely another to see Canadian farms expropriated by foreign interests not unlike the purchasing of our mineral rich lands out west, concerned more with their own national food security and not at all with Canadian food sovereignty.

It certainly does not help that just yesterday the United States took a backward step with buy America and unilaterally thickened the border in an effort to stimulate its own economy. Meanwhile the Canadian government is prepared to give itself a hernia removing all of the tools the Canadian wheat and barley producers rely on to protect their livelihood, including the Canadian Wheat Board.

The number one trade ask by Americans has always been to get rid of the Wheat Board because it gives our farmers a competitive advantage. Now with the Prime Minister as the head waiter and bottle washer to the Americans, we are preparing to hand them a huge agribusiness, their very request on a platter with absolutely nothing in return, not even a modest tip from a country which has shrugged its shoulders and wrapped itself in the shroud of American protectionism.

• (1640)

There have been 14 challenges to the World Trade Organization from the United States demanding that we get rid of the Canadian

Wheat Board. In every instance, the WTO has ruled in our favour and allowed western grain producers to maintain their valuable resource.

Why are there challenges? It is because the Wheat Board gives our farmers a competitive advantage that is the envy of others around the world. We must make no mistake that once it is gone the provisions our trade agreements say that it can never be brought back. We would be foolish and naive to think that our supply managed industries, like chicken, dairy, eggs and turkey, are not already now being lined up in the sights of the government for their demise.

This is not about limiting choice for farmers. The CWB is in a unique position to market different qualities of grain at different times of the year to different markets through a board that knows it serves the diverse needs of many farmers. Its strength is in the fact that all farmers across the Prairies are in it together. Its elected directors are farmers, too. They understand what it is to sell and market grain, the best grain in the world.

Should this legislation pass, by reducing the number of directors from 10 elected and 5 appointed to simply 5 government appointed directors to the 5-year interim voluntary wheat board, the Conservative government would have it that only its own people, dictated from the Prime Minister's office, speak to the multitude of farmers.

Overwhelmingly, in Wheat Board election after election, directors who support the single desk under the Wheat Board are returned. Farmers elect these directors and yet, once again, suppressing any sort of democratic expression, the government places a higher value on ideology than on the experience of farmers.

These are farmers who understand the virtue of saving \$1,400 per producer car on transportation costs through the CWB's unique bargaining position, a savings that will be almost immediately lost. Presently, it is in a position to negotiate with CN and CP Rail to ensure the adequate supply of producer cars. This, too, will be lost.

One of the more substantial complaints from within the agricultural industry is that Canada is regarded as an unreliable supplier of agricultural products by virtue of the fact that it cannot get its supplies to port along the railway. In large part, this is a direct result of the ongoing disputes between suppliers and CN-CP Rail.

The agricultural industries anticipated that these concerns would be addressed in the rail service review tabled in March of this year. Meanwhile, seven months later, we are talking about stripping prairie farmers of transportation infrastructure while the government shelves yet another report.

The government has failed to appoint a facilitator in good time. It has failed to address the day-to-day logistical issues of shippers, like getting them the right number of cars and on time, and is telegraphing to the farmers, who will be affected by this in large part, farmers who do not have immediate access to the border, farmers who are not on the main line, that where once their concerns were difficult to address with the rail companies, now they will be almost impossible to address.

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I have learned, through my discussion with the owners of Shortline Railways, that they will no longer be able to maintain their railways as they will no longer have the support of the Canadian Wheat Board once it is gone. The rest of the farmers will still not have any resolution along the main lines.

As it stands, hundreds of grain facilities have access to only one rail line and are held captive by either CP or CN, subject to their charges. Through the Canadian Wheat Board, farmers have had the clout to, as a unit, stand up to both CN and CP to get the best deal for their transportation costs possible.

In my conversations with western Canadian grain farmers, all too often I have heard tragic stories about the treatment of producers at the hands of the railways. The railway companies have such disregard for wheat farmers that often they will send railway cars with holes in them without any consideration for what grain will be lost along the way. Farmers, individually, are up against a behemoth, where once their collective clout enabled them recourse in the face of such poor treatment.

• (1645)

The government also refuses to acknowledge that there is a value added of \$500 million annually in services provided by the Canadian Wheat Board in the form of critical weather analysis and research and development, as well as the transportation benefits. Even by using a network of over 800 weather stations located on farms across western provinces, the Canadian Wheat Board provides accurate, up-to-the-minute weather information, as well as grain research and innovation.

In a token offering in the legislation, the government is recommending a voluntary check-off to be applied toward grain research and innovation. What farmer will check off additional money for research and innovation while her or his profits are going go up in smoke? However, the government seems intent on spending money, estimated conservatively at almost \$500 million, in a time when it claims that we are still in a fragile economic state, to demobilize an organization that has yet to require any federal funding. It has been farmer funded for farmer profits.

Forsaking billions of dollars in revenue with no sound replacement model is reckless. The government has made it clear that it will only listen to farmers so long as they are saying something the government wants to hear. Canadian farmers know what is in their own best interests and the government would do well to listen to their collective voice, not simply to the voices of the few who will be in a better position than the many to profit from the demise of the single desk system.

For our part, the Liberal Party entirely opposes this reckless, ideological legislation and finds no value in the feckless rhetoric of the minister and members content to vote like lemurs for the demise of a system that is still supported by the majority of its members.

I challenge the minister and the party opposite. If they are not afraid of the results of a plebiscite on the continued existence of the single desk system and if they truly feel that a majority of western Canadian farmers are on side with their prescription for the death of the Canadian Wheat Board, they should withdraw their legislation and hold their own plebiscite on the issue, as mandated by the very

legislation they hope to destroy, the very legislation that western Canadian farmers hold so sacrosanct, that the necessity for democratic expression is enshrined within it to protect farmers from the very abuse that the Minister of Agriculture is currently perpetrating.

In closing, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 40*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Bélangier	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brisson	Brousseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Freeman	Fry
Gameau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse

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Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	Penashue	Poilievre
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie	Preston	Raïtt
Liu	MacAulay	Rajotte	Rathgeber
Mai	Marston	Reid	Rempel
Masse	Mathysen	Richards	Richardson
May	McGuinty	Rickford	Ritz
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud	Saxton	Schellenberger
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Seeback	Shea
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Shipley	Shory
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair	Smith	Sopuck
Murray	Nantel	Sorenson	Stanton
Nash	Nicholls	Storseth	Strahl
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti	Sweet	Tilson
Papillon	Patry	Toet	Toews
Péclet	Perreault	Trost	Trottier
Pilon	Plamondon	Tweed	Uppal
Quach	Rae	Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Raynault	Regan	Van Loan	Wallace
Rousseau	Saganash	Warawa	Warkentin
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia	Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sellah	Sgro	Sky Country)	
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)		Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Sims (Newton—North Delta)		Williamson	Wong
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis	Woodworth	Yelich
Stewart	Sullivan	Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Thibeault	Toone	Zimmer — 151	
Tremblay	Trudeau		
Valeriotte — 121			

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Fast	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hoback
Hoeppner	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKenzie	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Ohrai
Oda	Opitz
Paradis	Payne

Nil

PAIRED

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.*[English]*

BILL C-18—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As is apparent from the two motions in just an hour and a half to attempt to block debate on this issue, I would like to advise that agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-18, An Act to reorganize the Canadian Wheat Board and to make consequential and related amendments to certain Acts.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

For the benefit—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I would like to have a little order.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: For the benefit of the House, I intend to allot two additional days for second reading of the bill. Including today, this will be three full days of debate. This is a debate about a choice between providing marketing freedom for western Canadian farmers and a seven-decade monopoly. Western Canadian farmers should be able to expect us to make a yes or no decision so that we can let a committee get on with its job of studying this bill in detail.

The Deputy Speaker: On a point of order, the hon. member for Malpeque.

Hon. Wayne Easter: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, how can the government abuse Parliament by first not allowing a vote of producers, as required under the law, and then get up and propose closure after two hours of debate? How could you allow that to happen, Madam Speaker?

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The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It sounds a lot like debate to me.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

• (1735)

SECOND READING

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in terms of process, it is interesting.

My question for my colleague is of a very serious nature. We have a government, and the Prime Minister—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: They are a little sensitive, and I can understand and appreciate why they are so sensitive on this issue.

After there is a debate, members are provided the opportunity to ask questions. I would suggest that the government would want to be a little patient so I can—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am not clear if this is a point of order or a question pursuant to the intervention of the Liberal member.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: It is a question, Madam Speaker, and I do not blame you for the confusion, because the government is very antsy, given the interesting reaction it had.

It is interesting to note that today we have a bill—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Questions and comments.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Wascana.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, following a speech, which was the speech given by the member for Guelph, there is the normal question and comment period. That is what the member for Winnipeg North is endeavouring to do: participate in questions and comments.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I would ask for a little order so that I can hear. I assumed the member was rising on a point of order. I am now calling for questions and comments and I will proceed in that order.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was very dismayed to hear my colleague from Guelph call for an end to debate on this bill. We have waited years to debate this bill, and now the Liberals do not want to debate it. We are very confused as to why they would not want to do that.

When I heard the member speak a little earlier, it was clear that one of the reasons they do not want to speak—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. This does not seem to be a point of order. Is it a question?

It is a question. I apologize.

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, I am almost there.

As I heard the member for Guelph speak—

The Deputy Speaker: Is this on a point of order? The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Speaker, now it is a point of order.

I was up on my feet shortly after the vote was called. You had asked for questions and I had twice indicated that, yes, I was standing on a question.

What I want to suggest, Madam Speaker, is that you review what has taken place. On both occasions I made it very clear I was standing up for a question. On both occasions, Madam Speaker, you had canvassed to ask if there were questions on the bill, and I said yes.

It was the government, in defying what is truly correct in terms of democratic principles by bringing forward its motion, that caused a bit of excitement. It did not—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I think the hon. member has made his point. We will indeed review the blues, but it is normally the procedure, when a member of a party speaks, to go to other members to ask the first question.

That is what I will do at the moment.

I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary to complete his question, so that we can move to an answer.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary said earlier that the Liberals moved the motion to shut down debate of the bill. I would like to make a correction. We wanted to adjourn the debate today but we did not want to shut down debate of the bill. I would ask the member to withdraw that statement. We want to debate and they do not want anything to do with it.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Very respectfully, this is not a point of order, once again. I would like the hon. parliamentary secretary to complete his question, so that we—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, I appreciate your patience. I understand why it would be tried.

I just got a great reminder in the last couple of days as to why we need to move as quickly as possible on this issue. I finally got to see the teddy bears that the Wheat Board has sent to the opposition. They are little teddy bears eight inches high. They have a little vest on them that sells the Canadian Wheat Board.

Farmers get up early in the morning. Early in the spring they go out in the mud and seed their crops. The Wheat Board takes their money and buys teddy bears. Farmers spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on input for their crop, and the Wheat Board spends their money on teddy bears.

Farmers work all night to get their crops in. The Wheat Board spends their money on teddy bears. There is no clearer reason—

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The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Guelph in response.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I did not quite hear a question in that comment—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Malpeque on a point of order.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, I want to know why the parliamentary secretary gets up in this House and consistently lies. The Wheat Board had nothing to do with these bears. It is farmers who raised the money at rallies, to make their point—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order. I would like a little bit of order, please. The hon. member for Guelph.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: First, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank all my colleagues for being so anxious to get up and answer all the questions that are being posed to me. I appreciate it.

I want to point out that the member opposite is misleading Canadians when he suggests that we are trying to adjourn debate on the entire bill. I am disappointed, frankly, that he would try to do that. The adjournment was merely for today, and as has been stated by the member for Bourassa. In fact it is the Conservatives who are attempting to silence the debate on this issue.

I am also disappointed with that. Canadians are disappointed with that. Western Canadian farmers who are looking for answers on why they are not having a plebiscite pursuant to section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board are most particularly disappointed with that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, what does the hon. member think of the fact that this government is displaying such ignorance and such a lack of willingness to listen to the farmers who have spoken out against what it is doing? The result of the plebiscite has been known for a month now and the majority of farmers have said they want the Canadian Wheat Board to continue operating.

[*English*]

What does the member think about the fact that the government is showing such contempt for the voices of western farmers who elected pro single desk Wheat Board directors to represent them?

What are the Conservatives going to say to their constituents when they go back to hear from the farmers in their very communities that they want the Wheat Board to continue to market some of the best wheat in the world?

• (1745)

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Madam Speaker, it never ceases to amaze me that the government is driven by ideology instead of evidence, first, on the omnibus crime bill and, now, on this particular piece of legislation.

I look at the evidence; I do not look at ideology. The telltale signs are when the government makes this announcement, the shares in Viterra spike. When it makes this announcement, suddenly, Alliance Grain Traders Inc. decides only now to build a manufacturing plant in Saskatchewan to make pasta. Why? Because it said so, because it

knows it is going to pay less for western Canadian grain. Those are the telltale signs. That is the evidence that the Conservative Party refuses to look at when it makes these ideological decisions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said the other day, in terms of responding to a question in question period:

The fact of the matter is that western farmers voted for marketing freedom, and that is what they are going to get.

What I have found is that the current government, more than any other government that I am aware of, just feels that it has this mandate that it can do whatever it is that it wants. If we take a look at prairie grain wheat farmers and the fact that they had a legitimate plebiscite in which in excess of 60% of those grain farmers said, “We want to keep the Wheat Board”, the current government, headed by the current Prime Minister has made it very clear that it does not care what the farmers want, and that is reiterated by the motion that was brought forward just a few minutes ago to limit the amount of debate on the Wheat Board.

My question for my colleague is, what type of leadership does he think this speaks of? How does he feel our farmers in rural Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta are going to respond when they see the type of action that the government has superimposed on them? Does he believe the government really cares about prairie grain wheat farmers?

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend from—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale is rising on a point of order?

Mr. David Sweet: Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I waited a few minutes because it got very animated in here.

I would like you to check the blues. The member for Malpeque clearly used unparliamentary language toward the parliamentary secretary, as well as a prop, in his vociferous comments. I would like you to check that and then ask for his apology.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): On the first point, I did not hear any unparliamentary language. However, we will check the record to see if such incident did occur and we will get back to the House, if necessary.

On the second point, members will know that the use of props and other objects to support their points, of course, is not permitted in the House. I would encourage hon. members to abide by the Standing Orders.

The hon. member for Malpeque is rising on the same point of order?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Yes I am, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, I did use unparliamentary language and I will withdraw that language. Also, I did hold up one of these bears. However, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is, and I will not hold up the bear again, the government cannot bear the truth when it comes to western farmers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I think we are drifting back into debate again.

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The hon. member for Guelph.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, in response to the question posed to me by the member for Winnipeg North, true leadership would have been exercised, would have been demonstrated by a Prime Minister had he allowed the grain farmers to participate in a vote, a plebiscite, conducted by the government.

So desperate are they to have their voices heard because there is not one MP from the west who is willing to stand up for western Canadian grain farmers. So desperate are they, that they had to hold their own plebiscite.

The government does not show leadership at all. I have already described the Prime Minister as being the head chef and bottle washer for the United States of America. That is not unparliamentary. It is the truth that he is prepared to forfeit and sacrifice the well-being of grain farmers out west for the well-being of Americans.

• (1750)

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious matter we are discussing. My constituents have been waiting for this for 70 years. It is really troubling to see the third party make a mockery of this debate. This is a serious debate that we should be having in the House today.

I have a quote here from Professor Charlebois from the University of Guelph. He said:

At the end of the day, single-desk marketing should cease. Such a reform will make Canada more competitive, as the monopoly is a hindrance to our ability to compete globally.

My question is for the hon. member for Guelph. If he will not listen to my farmers who are being oppressed by the tyranny of the Wheat Board, will he at least listen to his own constituents?

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak to Mr. Charlebois, and in the same tone he also indicated that there were alternatives to help and fix the Wheat Board that exists. I will acknowledge that the Wheat Board needs to be tweaked, but I will not acknowledge that the Wheat Board needs to be killed.

Further evidence of the fact that the Conservatives ignore the evidence is found in the *Economist*, which said:

Smaller producers, faced with mounting marketing costs, will inevitably have to sell their farms to bigger rivals or agribusiness companies...devastating small prairie towns, whose economies depend on individual farmers with disposable income.

I say shame on the member for not standing up for those in his riding who want the Wheat Board saved.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here today to speak to this bill. We have obviously been fed some pretty thin gruel here over the last little while with a few blobs of misinformation, a hail of exaggeration, and maybe a pinch of almost undetectable truth mixed into a base of fear. The opposition is clearly trying to create fear. We think it is time to be far more responsible than that.

I am pleased to speak to this historic bill which would at long last bring freedom to western Canadian wheat and barley producers. It is a great recipe for western Canadian farmers: a cup of innovation, a healthy dollop of value-added jobs along with buckets of opportunity. It is all going to create a smorgasbord of a stronger

economy for western Canadian producers. Our government's top priority has been the economy, which is why we think this is so important.

By now most western Canadian farmers have finished harvesting what is reported to be a high quality wheat and barley crop that will feed the world. If we remember the spring, there was a challenge to get that crop in. Our farmers have worked hard all summer and finally they have that off in good condition. They have managed that crop every step of the way. They seeded, sprayed, fertilized and harvested it, and this bill would finally give them the freedom to market it.

Many farmers are farming 5,000, 10,000, 15,000, 20,000 acres and we believe that all Canadian farmers should be able to position their businesses to capture the marketing opportunities that are open to them. They do not need anybody from downtown anywhere telling them what to do with their product. The last thing they need is people lecturing them from outside the designated area, especially when they come from areas where people are free to market their own products. Western Canadian farmers are capable of marketing.

I could talk for hours about how much energy has been put into this by so many people for so long. We are finally going to provide western Canadian farmers with that opportunity.

In the June 2011 Speech from the Throne our government reiterated our commitment and that was to ensure that western Canadian farmers have the freedom to sell wheat and barley on the open market. Today, we are delivering on that promise. With this proposed legislation, we would deliver marketing choice for western grain farmers. We are taking a phased approach to allow the industry time to adjust to the significant change to its business.

The minister has spoken to the overall themes of marketing freedom. I would like to walk members and others through the specifics and the significance of this bill.

The bill would change the Canadian Wheat Board marketing system in an orderly and phased approach. The proposed legislation would remove the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board, which for so long many farmers have asked for. It would allow the Canadian Wheat Board to be continued as a voluntary marketing organization for up to five years as it makes its transition to full private ownership. It would allow the Canadian Wheat Board to finalize the 2011-12 crop year.

I think this is important in order to avoid market disruption. The goal is for farmers and grain marketers to be able to start forward contracting to the 2012-13 year, well in advance of August 1, 2012, which is the start of the new crop year.

We owe it to producers to provide market certainty so that they can plan their businesses for the 2012-13 year. Frivolous debate and delay will hurt our farmers and our reputation as a reliable high quality grain supplier. I guess that is why I was so disappointed when I heard that the chair of the Canadian Wheat Board had bought the NDP caucus breakfast about a month ago and then begged it to delay this legislation in any way and so long that it would completely disrupt the market when it was introduced. That is not something that is in the best interests of our farmers.

Farmers want to know what their marketing system will be for the 2012 crop. We need certainty so that Canada can continue to sell wheat and barley, and maintain its reputation as a reliable supplier.

I should also point out that the opposition has left some impression that if the Wheat Board goes, the quality of our grain will go down. It is the farmers who grow the quality grain and not the Canadian Wheat Board.

I am tremendously proud of the work that has been done at the Swift Current research station over the years. It has been responsible for the development of most of the varieties that are grown in western Canada and it continues to do great work. From now on we will be able to keep all of those varieties in Canada. We will not have to watch folks across the border often growing varieties that the Wheat Board would not let us register in our own area even after they had been developed there.

The international grain trade works largely on forward contracting. We know, for future purchases and sales, if there is uncertainty in the marketplace about the rule of who can sell Canadian wheat and barley, there is a risk that buyers will turn to other countries to buy that wheat and barley. We do not want that to happen.

• (1755)

Canadian domestic millers and maltsters have told the government that they want to forward contract wheat and barley a year in advance to their bakery and brewery customers. They want this legislation to be in place as soon as possible. They would see January 1 as late but acceptable. We know the Canadian wheat and barley sector can meet international and domestic needs for high quality products. However, farmers and market participants both need certainty in order to plan their business.

During the transition period, the interim voluntary organization will still be called the Canadian Wheat Board. It will continue to offer farmers the option of pooling their crops with initial prices guaranteed by the Government of Canada, just as is done now. They will continue to benefit from a borrowing guarantee that is backed by the federal government and they will develop a business plan for the revitalization, which will be reviewed by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food no later than 2016.

We fully recognize that there will be costs associated with this transition. The voluntary Canadian wheat board may be a smaller organization than the vast monopoly that exists today. The government is prepared to assist with the extraordinary costs associated with winding down the monopoly. Farmers have always paid the costs of operating the Canadian Wheat Board, and I need to point that out and emphasize it, but the government recognizes that they should not be left alone to deal with the costs of transition to a

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voluntary mandate. The government is ready to assist while being responsible for the use of taxpayer dollars.

During our extensive consultations, industry raised a number of valid issues around transition. Over the summer, our working group met a wide range of industry players. Their report does an excellent job of addressing the major transitional issues that will be faced by the trade.

I would like to talk about a few of those issues that have been raised by prairie farmers.

The first issue is the voluntary Canadian wheat board's access to elevators, ports and terminals. The working group on marketing freedom examined this issue in quite a bit of detail. It expects and we would agree with it that grain companies will be actively competing for grain volume on the open market. If farmers want to market through the voluntary wheat board, we expect it will be able to contract with grain handlers to handle this tonnage. This happens with all of the other crops.

Curt Vossen, the president of Richardson International, said:

I think you'll see more players, not less. There may be some joint ventures, some alliances, some mergers of new players and existing, but I think you'll see a proliferation because people will inherently want to get into this market.

That is exactly what we have seen happen in Australia over the last couple of years.

I would add that the elevator industry is onside with the direction that we are taking. Grain companies currently offer handling services to third parties who do not own elevators or port terminals, many of whom are actually their direct competitors.

Wade Sobkowich, executive director to the Western Grain Elevators Association, told the working group:

It makes good commercial sense for grain companies to provide services to the CWB, especially in circumstances where the volume of wheat and barley to be handled is significant.

There is precedent as well for competitive, farmer-owned companies competing in the grain trade through alliances and agreements.

I will give a couple of examples of where that will work and where it is already working. The Gardiner Dam Terminal Ltd. is a producer-owned company that has entered into a joint venture agreement with Viterra. They jointly own and operate an inland grain terminal located near Strongfield, Saskatchewan, and a crop input supply business near Broderick, Saskatchewan. This project will deliver better service to farmers while helping a farmer-owned company capture new growth.

Another great example of farmers taking control of the value chain is the Westlock Terminals, a new generation co-op in north central Alberta. This is a wholly, locally owned co-op. My colleague is very familiar with that, I am sure. It kept a local elevator alive while following the merger of Agricore and United Grain Growers 10 years ago.

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Today, Westlock has 230 members and recently opened a new plant. Its general manager, Clifford Bell, said that marketing choice “will present WTL with opportunities that have never been seen before by our New Gen Co-op. The changes will provide us with new opportunities and ways of exporting grain”.

Those are just two examples of how farmers can take charge of their own financial future when they are given the opportunity. I see no reason that a voluntary Canadian wheat board cannot succeed as well.

The government will continue to monitor the elevator access situation and step in if needed. This staged approach will provide the necessary checks and balances to help ensure a smooth transition.

The second valid concern that is being raised is the issue of producers' continued access to producer cars. My area is particularly affected by producer cars. We use more of them than anybody on the Prairies. I used them myself for many years. I used them long before the Wheat Board was even interested in them.

• (1800)

I want to say up front that the Canadian Wheat Board monopoly has no bearing on access to producer cars. I also will say that I have been a champion of and have used producer cars over the years and many of the producers in the area were using those producer cars for decades. It was only in the last seven years that the Wheat Board has been involved with them.

The right to use producer cars is involved in the Canada Grain Act. The Canadian Grain Commission allocates those cars to producers. This would not change. Currently, the CWB manages the marketing of grain shipped in producer cars so shipments are related to a sale. Under the new rules, producers and short lines would be able to make commercial arrangements with the grain companies or the voluntary wheat board to market their grain. So it would just give more options to farmers.

Shortline Railways are expecting some adjustments as they would have more options of marketing partners for the grain volumes that they can attract from producers. I have met with many of the shortlines and I can say that the ones that are forward oriented anticipate great opportunities as we move ahead.

For example, Kevin Friesen, president of the Boundary Trail Railway Company, farms in Manitoba. He says that the government is listening and that he is optimistic about the future for shortlines and the use of producer cars. We are already seeing some very exciting partnerships and what the western producer called a breakthrough in railway co-operation. Mobil Grain Ltd. and West Central Road and Rail have teamed up to create Saskatchewan's 12th shortline railway. Big Sky Rail will run on 354 kilometres of track on former CN lines west of Lake Diefenbaker. President Sheldon Affleck, who has done a great job of running his short line, says that there is the possibility to probably at least double and possibly triple what has come off that line. In a short time, he says, that they have found terrific farmer uptake.

I would like to also take a minute to discuss grain quality. As I said earlier, it is farmers who grow the grain, not the Canadian Wheat Board. The quality will not change because of the changes we would make. The Canadian Grain Commission would continue to

provide its services, regardless of who is marketing the grain. Our customers continue to choose Canada over the competition, not because of the Wheat Board but because of the relentless commitment to quality by all parts of the value chain and, I would say, including, first and foremost, the farmer, the producer.

The current CWB is an administrator and a grain marketer. It is not the decision-maker on varieties registered for production in Canada and neither are the grain companies. It is the Canadian Food Inspection Agency that oversees and approves the registration of wheat varieties. It is the mandate of the CGC to ensure Canada's high-quality standards are continued. Under marketing freedom, both agencies would be continuing their important work.

It is clear there would be much more opportunity for farmers to grow niche varieties of grain. This is an area where the Canadian Wheat Board has fallen down, even though, on the few examples where it tried it, it was very successful. It never developed this to the point where it should have been. Farmers are already aware that there are new opportunities and they are looking forward to taking advantage of them.

I should address the issue of the funding of future wheat and barley research and market development. I think it is important. I heard my colleague talking about it earlier and he clearly did not understand how it has operated in the past. I do not think he realized that there has been a voluntary check-off and that would continue. We understand that research is key in keeping our grain sector strong and competitive. I will assure members here and farmers that a deduction from producer sales would be established to continue the funding by farmers of those activities. Those funds would support the work that has been done by Western Grains Research Foundation, CIGI and the Canadian Malting Barley Technical Centre.

The deduction would be mandated for the government for the transition and, in the meantime, we will be discussing with the industry a long-term mechanism to support research and market development to keep our great industry moving forward. I think this is a good initiative by the government and will be welcomed by the industry.

Our government knows that innovation drives competitiveness in agriculture. We know we need to keep our wheat producers on the leading edge of innovation and this check-off would help to do that.

Fear is always the biggest enemy of change and we need only to look to the Australian experience to see how a wheat industry can prosper once a monopoly is removed. Australia minister of trade, Dr. Craig Emerson, recently said, "it was a remarkably smooth transition". He continued by stating, "There is no call to go back, to turn back the clock". He then said, "it's been one of the great reforms in Australia, and I'd certainly recommend it to everyone".

Already, we are seeing that same kind of excitement and innovation building not only in Canada but across the continent as buyers begin to jockey for farmers' business. For the first time ever, the Minneapolis Grain Exchange will be accepting Canadian grain for future settlement. Rita Maloney, its director of marketing and business development, said:

We do see this as an area of growth potential for us as it will allow producers, elevators and marketers across Canada to be able to not only use the contract for hedging, but also be part of the delivery process in the future.

• (1805)

Meanwhile, ICE Futures Canada in Winnipeg is working on creating its own spring wheat and durum wheat futures contracts based in western Canada.

Also, the announcement last week of a pasta plant for the Regina area clearly highlights the great improvements that this change will bring about.

The potential that we have in western Canada from these changes is unlimited.

Marketing freedom will usher in a new springtime for Canadian wheat. Over the past two decades, we have seen wheat and barley acreage decline as farmers voted with their air seeders and turned to canola and pulses. A record harvest of canola is forecast this year.

We must not buy into fear. We must embrace a future, a future where producers will be able to manage their businesses with control over who they sell to, where young farmers will finally have the tools they need to make their dreams a reality, where entrepreneurs can harness innovation and add value to their crops beyond the farm gate, where there are new opportunities in grain marketing and where the property rights of all western Canadian wheat and barley farmers are finally restored.

The future of the western Canadian agriculture industry is bright. We are taking this historic and decisive action today to ensure certainty and clarity for producers and grain buyers, who will soon be entering into contracts for wheat and barley for the 2012-13 crop year. Forward thinking, not fearmongering, made Canada the world supplier of choice for wheat. As Marquis wheat did a century ago, marketing freedom will breathe new life into our grain industry.

The government is committed to delivering on our long-term promise to give western Canadian grain marketing farmers the freedom they deserve. The sky will not fall under marketing freedom. In fact, as the minister said yesterday, the sky will be the limit.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for the hon. member. The government keeps talking about the strong mandate the public and Prairie farmers gave it to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board. I would like the hon. member to

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tell me why the government refuses to follow what is written in the law. The law states clearly that the farmers have the right to vote on any changes to the Canadian Wheat Board.

What is the government doing about the 60% of Canadians who did not vote for them? Only 40% of Canadians voted for them. What is this government doing to respect the interests of the 60% of farmers who voted by plebiscite to say they wanted to keep the Canadian Wheat Board?

What does the government have to say about that? Why does it not want to hold a referendum or plebiscite? Why does it not want to obey the law? Why does it not want to respect the interests of 60% of the Canadian public? It only respects the interests of the corporations that give it money because we know full well that those who are going to benefit from this are the government's best friends, the big corporations.

• (1810)

[*English*]

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the member has reached some conclusions. I am not sure that she has adequate information to do that.

I would like to give her a bit of the history. She maybe does not know that farmers in western Canada did not choose to have the Wheat Board in the first place. In 1943 the government mandated that the Wheat Board would be made mandatory. In the order-in-council, there were two reasons—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member does not mean to continually mislead the House, but when he said that the farmers of western Canada did not choose to have the Wheat Board, yes they did. They choose it in a plebiscite. I would like to ask him to retract—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The intervention by the member for Timmins—James Bay is more in the range of debate and not a point of order. I will ask the parliamentary secretary to continue.

The Parliamentary Secretary for the Canadian Wheat Board.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I am really concerned about the quality of information the NDP caucus has been given. The member stands on a point of order on something completely inaccurate.

In 1943 the Wheat Board was made mandatory by order-in-council by the government for two reasons.

The first was because the price of grain was rising too high and it wanted to control inflation, so farmers were punished. Their grain prices were held down.

The second reason was that there needed to be a cheap source of grain provided to Europe for the war effort. It was taken from western Canada and shipped to Europe.

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He probably does not know that following the war there was a four year agreement where farmers in western Canada provided their grain at \$2 a bushel below world price so there was cheap grain supplied to England.

He does not know that in the late 1990s farmers went to jail because they wanted to market their own grain.

Those members need to know those points before they stand and talk about this issue.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question has to do with quality of information. Specifically, I have a math question for the parliamentary secretary.

Numbers are important. They have been important in my life as an engineer and I sometimes make important decisions based on numbers. I understand that 62% of western farmers who were surveyed said that they wanted to keep the Canadian Wheat Board as it is. Now 62% is a bigger number, and some would say quite a bit bigger, than 38%. Therefore, 62 seems to me to be bigger than 38, but I have trouble resolving that because on that side of the House everybody keeps saying that western farmers all want the change.

I have a simple question for the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands. Is 62 a bigger number than 38? Please enlighten me.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member opposite this. What is more important, his numbers or freedom for our farmers to make their own decisions on the monopoly? He clearly does not understand what has happened on the Prairies. He does not understand even what happened there this summer by the nature of his question. There are some other things the member needs to understand as well.

I do not know if the member knows that for the entire time I farmed I could not sell my own grain. I produced grain for almost 40 years on my farm and I was not allowed to sell it. He does not seem to understand that there is a problem with that. He does not seem to understand that a good solution would be to set up a marketing agency that would be voluntary so those farmers who chose to pool their grain together could do that and those who did not could market their own grain. It is a great solution. It would solve both problems.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for his long-term commitment to this issue and for fighting for freedom for farmers.

I have sat in the House and listened to the opposition talk about the sky falling, saying that farmers will have nobody to market their grain to. The member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands came with a positive speech about a voluntary wheat board that would still give choice.

This fall I had to make a choice to sell my canola. The board would not even take my wheat. Most of the acres that I have now will be going into canola, like many other farmers.

After listening to the doom and gloom from the opposition side about the Wheat Board not being able to exist, why would any grain marketer who works for the Canadian Wheat Board not begin looking for a job with Viterra or Cargill? The opposition is painting the Wheat Board as being imbecilic and unable to compete although it has created markets and clients and sales for decades.

Why is the opposition putting the last nail in the Canadian Wheat Board?

• (1815)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, the member for Crowfoot has been an advocate for change. In the 11 years that he has been here he has worked hard on this file as well. We have been joined by so many other folks here. I mentioned Westlock. My colleague from Westlock—St. Paul is one of those people who has worked hard on this issue. He has worked with his folks at home on it as well.

What is probably has happened is the opposition listened to the chair of the Canadian Wheat Board. He came here a month ago and asked us to delay the implementation of the act, but it was for so long that the market would have been completely disrupted and farmers would have been unable to market their grain. That is shameful and embarrassing.

As I said before, the best solution is to give farmers the option of a voluntary pool if they want to put their grain together with their neighbours or they can choose to market their grain themselves. We think that this solution will work. If farmers support a voluntary wheat board, then it will thrive very well. There is no reason for the government to force that on anyone.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was not able to hear a straight answer from the parliamentary secretary regarding the government's failure to follow section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act that guarantees farmers the right to vote on changes to the Canadian Wheat Board's marketing structure.

I would like to hear why the government is failing to follow the act? Why is it failing to listen to the voices of farmers? Why is it failing to listen to the directors who were elected from the Prairies? Why is the government failing to listen to the rural communities across western Canada that want the Wheat Board to exist? Why do the Conservatives not stand and actually represent the views of westerners in the House?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned because the member has stood a number of times and asked us about Churchill and how we will protect it. We came in yesterday with a package that does exactly that.

The member is talking about people not representing their constituents. If she is to represent her constituents, perhaps she should change her position and work with us. She should be willing to stand and say that she has made a mistake and that the government does stand up for western Canadians, for her riding and for the port of Churchill.

We would welcome the member to join with us, vote to support the bill and get it through as quickly as possible to get all those things taken care of so the western Canadian grain industry and the port of Churchill can continue to thrive.

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**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, before the members go off about the fact that I am not from the west, the Conservatives have a Minister of Fisheries and Oceans who looks after the west coast and he is from Fredericton, New Brunswick. I suggest those members keep silent on that one.

This is not particularly germane to grain, but I have a quick question on this whole theory about the single desk. The Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation is a self-sustaining corporation, which was created in 1969, and is the buyer, processor and marketer of freshwater fish from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and North-west Territories and part of northwestern Ontario.

Does the hon. parliamentary secretary believe that this, too, is on the chopping block and that the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation also limits the freedom for which he is looking?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that this is under the purview of the provinces. The Saskatchewan government has authority over that.

Again, it is good that he speaks for a different part of the country, because we want to provide the same freedom for farmers right across the country. It is the 21st century, people spend, as I have said, hundreds of thousands of dollars on their own operations. They have to pay their expenses. After growing their own crop, harvesting it, buying the bins and the machinery to do that, they should be able to market that product themselves as well.

• (1820)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I give the hon. member for Churchill the floor, I would point out that I will have to interrupt her at 30 minutes after the hour as this is the normal time for the end of government orders for the day.

The hon. member for Churchill.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand here and represent the people of northern Manitoba, people who are truly a key part of the mosaic of Canada.

As the member of Parliament for Churchill, I am proud to bring forward their voices, the countless voices of Canadians who have come up to me from communities like Churchill, War Lake on the Bay Line, Thicket Portage, Thompson, The Pas where the train starts and people living in Carrot River Valley where they grow all sorts of grains, where they are part of the agricultural economy of the west, people from all across northern Manitoba and others from southern Manitoba, like communities like Dauphin, Swan River, Selkirk, from communities in my neighbouring province, Saskatchewan, from Prince Albert, from Indian Head, from Saskatoon, from Regina, from communities like Medicine Hat, and going further westward.

I have had the chance to hear from so many Canadians from my part of the country, from western Canada, who have asked me to bring forward their voices in this House, voices that have been represented time and time again, whether it was through the plebiscite, through voting for the directors on the board of the Canadian Wheat Board or through the messages they sent to their members of Parliament on the government side, messages that often went unheard, certainly in the last few months, the requests for meetings that were ignored from people across western Canada who

said that they believe in the single desk but that they also believe in the need to have their voices heard.

We hear the government talk about freedom but what about the freedom for farmers to vote? Not only did the government completely ignore the plebiscite that was organized by the Canadian Wheat Board, but it followed that up by failing to follow the government act, the Canadian Wheat Board Act, section 47.1, which guarantees the farmers' right to vote on changes to the Canadian Wheat Board's marketing structure.

This failure to allow farmers to vote, to allow farmers who are raising families on farms or in rural communities, to allow the children and the grandchildren of farmers who now live in urban centres across western Canada to ensure that their relatives are being heard, extended relatives who are still struggling, running the family farm, to be heard, speaks to not just the complete disrespect of democracy in our country, but the most fundamental insult to western Canadians in this House, painting them as though they somehow all agree with what the government is saying.

Where is the proof? Where is the referendum? If the Conservatives are so sure, why do they not go out and poll the farmers? Why do they not go out and implement a real referendum so that we can hear farmers' voices directly?

I think we know why. It is because 22,000 people voted in a plebiscite to say that they wanted the Canadian Wheat Board, because a vast majority of farmers across the Prairies voted for directors who are pro-single desk.

To me and to, I think, so many of us living in the west, the fact that we have a government that fails to listen to the very voices of the people whose livelihoods are being threatened and are at risk, already at risk, might I add, given the economic situation in which they live, it is an absolute insult. It really shows how much the government is willing to take the west for granted.

I would like to share a story about a more personal connection to the Wheat Board and what it has meant, I think, for us not just here at home but internationally. When I was 17 years old, I had the chance to do a study, while I was on scholarship studying in Hong Kong, on the comparative advantage that Canada has when it comes to trading wheat. I had the chance to sit down with people at the Wheat Board, look at its sections in terms of research, hear from people in the sales department and listen to people who were part of the chain of production, going back to the poor, the farmer who produces that wheat.

• (1825)

I got to hear how important the work of the Wheat Board was in making sure that our product was the best product going overseas, knowing that the hard work of people in my hometown of Thompson was part of that chain to make sure Canada's best wheat got on the ship at the port of Churchill to go around the world.

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I also had the chance to hear from our international partners, from our great trading partner, China, which knew that Canada is known for having the best wheat in the world. That brand of Canadian wheat was not Cargill's, nor Viterra's. It was not any corporation's. It was ours. It is ours. It has been the work of the Canadian Wheat Board working hand in hand with farmers, working hand in hand with producers, the people who work along the transportation lines, the people who work to make sure that our product gets overseas, that has ensured for so many decades that we as Canadians have been able to stand proud and call our wheat the best wheat in the world.

Now we have a government that is not only failing to listen to western farmers, but is all too happy to give that brand away, to give those investments made by hard-working farmers, by families, by rural communities, by communities across western Canada away, to give it to Cargill, to give it to Viterra whose stocks go up every time they hear from the Prime Minister or the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. Those are the numbers to be noted, because those are the people who will benefit.

We often hear about the Australian case. Unfortunately, even in that discussion, the government has proven to be very misleading. In some ways what happened in Australia was different, but in many ways it tells us what awaits us down the road if the government's wish to dismantle the Wheat Board becomes a reality. Western farmers can look to Australia to know what is in store for them when the single desk is eradicated.

When the Australian wheat board had single desk power, Australian wheat could command premiums of over \$99 per tonne over American wheat, but by December 2008 it had dropped to a discount of \$27 per tonne below U.S. wheat. In three short years, Australia's 40,000 wheat farmers went from running their own grain marketing system, selling virtually all of Australia's wheat, which was 12% of world wheat production worth about \$5 billion, on their own behalf to being mere customers of Cargill, one of the world's largest agribusiness corporations, which is privately owned and based in the United States.

Since 2006 the Australian wheat board's share of Australia's wheat sales has dropped from 100% to 23% nationally, with 25 other companies in the market all looking to make money on the spread between purchase and sale prices.

Australian farmer Ross Philips was interviewed about the loss of the Australian wheat board. He pointed out, "Be careful of giving away your single desk. You will get every single farmer competing against every single farmer".

For the farmer there is nothing more difficult than selling grain to a trader who does that every day. If orderly marketing does not exist, we will see mass bankruptcy for farmers, and we have lost our premiums equal to about 10% to 15% of the price.

This is a voice from our neighbours, a Commonwealth country that has gone down the very same destructive path which the government is taking us down. The story here is not only is the government failing to give farmers the democratic right that they have in law to vote, but it is taking every single westerner for granted.

We in the NDP will stand to fight the government's plan. I look forward to working with western Canadians to make sure that our voices are heard in this House of Commons.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Churchill will have 10 minutes for her speech and 10 minutes for questions and comments when the House resumes debate on the motion.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on September 21, I asked the government two questions.

The first question dealt with residential school survivors. Many of us in the House are receiving information from a lot of our constituents who work with first nations people. They are concerned that some first nations members who had gone to residential schools are still falling between the cracks and are not receiving the compensation that is due to them. The minister responded that the government had implemented a number of programs in co-operation with first nations organizations and that the program was ongoing and essentially that it was doing its best. I wish to follow up with the government in that area.

If the outreach is ongoing, is it based on an evaluation of how effective the program was in order to reach the residential school survivors and to make sure they fully understand the process for compensation? Having reviewed that, has the government determined other measures that may be necessary to make sure that all who are deserving of compensation in fact receive that compensation?

I am simply seeking additional information. Is the government looking into new and different ways to make sure that some people, who I am sure the government would agree deserve the compensation, are not simply falling between the cracks?

The second question I had raised on September 21 related to equal access to education, to the economy and to services that all other Canadians who are non-aboriginal have the benefit of.

I share the concern raised by National Chief Shawn Atleo that aboriginal high school students are statistically far more likely to be incarcerated than to graduate from high school. Apparently, only 41% of aboriginal students graduate compared to 77% for the remainder of Canadians.

The fact is aboriginal women constitute one-third of the women in custody and unfortunately that number is rising. While everyone who commits a crime should face justice, and no one would disagree with that, surely there is an obligation to ensure equity and justice for indigenous Canadians so that they do not fall into the trap of entering into a world of criminal behaviour.

Many have called for more significant measures than have been taken by successive federal governments. In raising these issues, I am not simply pointing arrows at the present government. We have had a succession of reports by auditors general. In fact, we were advised by the former auditor general, Sheila Fraser, that she had tabled 31 reports that raised significant concerns about the failure to address the inequitable treatment of first nations people.

I will quote from a speech that the former auditor general gave following the tabling of her final report. She said:

It's no secret that their [first nations'] living conditions are worse than elsewhere in Canada....What's truly shocking, however, is the lack of improvement. Last year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada reported that between 2001 and 2006 there was little or no progress in the well-being of First Nations communities. In a wealthy country like Canada, this gap is simply unacceptable.

The auditor general in successive reports raised concerns about poor housing, lack of equal access to education, and the inequities in the amount of funds provided to first nations students as opposed to other Canadians. The auditor general called for major structural reforms. Of interest, a second report that was issued in a coroner's review in Ontario by Justice Stephen Goudge made the same findings and recommended similar structural changes.

The question I ask the government today is: In light of the auditor general's report and her frustrations, as well as reports such as the one by the coroner of Ontario, what is the government doing to address these structural reform needs?

• (1835)

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to respond in this adjournment debate to the question put by the member on September 21. In fact, I am pleased to rise to speak to the question the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona has posed.

There were a number of Indian residential schools in the great Kenora riding and across northern Ontario. Indeed, in my previous life as a lawyer, I had the honour to represent more than 900 Indian residential school survivors principally from across northern Ontario in the negotiations and as a signatory on their behalf. Soon after, I represented many in the independent assessment process, which I will allude to later in my response.

Let me remind the hon. member that our government is committed to a fair and lasting resolution to the legacy of Indian residential schools and is focusing on an agenda of reconciliation and renewal between aboriginal people and all Canadians.

[Translation]

In 2007, the Government of Canada, former students, churches, the Assembly of First Nations and Inuit organizations negotiated and

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signed the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The implementation of the settlement agreement, the largest class action settlement in Canadian history, began over four years ago under the strict supervision of nine courts.

[English]

One of the elements of the settlement agreement is the common experience payment for all eligible former students who resided at recognized Indian residential schools prescribed in the agreement. I am happy to report to this place that, to date, 97% of estimated former residential school students eligible for the common experience payment under the Indian residential schools agreement have received their payments. More than \$1.6 billion have been paid to 77,394 individuals.

It was always understood by all parties to the agreement and by the courts that, indeed, it would be a challenge to reach all potential beneficiaries. To ensure that residential school survivors were aware of their rights and benefits under the settlement agreement, three separate notice plans were widely disseminated in aboriginal and mainstream media in 2007, and in the spring of 2011 in English, French and 16 aboriginal languages from coast to coast to coast.

As an additional effort, a grassroots outreach strategy funded by the Government of Canada was implemented in partnership with the Assembly of First Nations and other aboriginal organizations, as well as Service Canada centres nationally. Combined, these activities reached 98% of the target population of aboriginal people over 25 years old and these efforts were deemed highly effective by the courts. In addition to these efforts, the government established a community impact working group, comprised of several federal departments and national, regional and community organizations.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada also established the community impacts working group, which brings together representatives of several government departments and national, regional and community organizations.

[English]

In addition to the common experience payment, the settlement agreement includes an independent assessment process, the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, commemoration and health supports. All of these, I am happy to report, are well under way.

• (1840)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the update, unfortunately I do not have a reply to my question. I fully credited the government for the actions taken in co-operation with first nations. I credited it for its efforts.

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The question was specifically this. Having recognized that there are 2% to 3% who have not received the payments, what in addition is being done? Has there been an evaluation or a determination that there may be some other mechanism to get to the last of those people? They could be homeless. They could be people, such as I have spoken to, on the streets in Edmonton who are simply discombobulated by the process, sometimes moving between jurisdictions. I am simply asking, was there an additional attempt to do that?

I did not receive a response to my second question and that is about the Auditor General's concerns about the need for major structural reform in the way that equality is to be provided to the first nations people of Canada, including the fact that the government has not defined the level and range of services or is acting by policy and not law. There is a need to prescribe unambiguous government commitments and, rather than annual contribution agreements, certainty in law.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, again, I am happy to respond to the question in this adjournment debate as it was posed on September 21.

Implementing the Indian residential schools settlement agreement is an important milestone in Canada's effort to promote reconciliation with aboriginal people, and between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people.

Our government remains committed to ensuring that former students who resided at Indian residential schools are fairly compensated, and are aware of their rights and benefits under that settlement agreement to which all parties agreed to its terms.

The Government of Canada made it a priority to ensure that all forecasted 80,000 residential school survivors are aware of their rights and benefits under the settlement agreement. This was achieved through a court approved notice plan and additional Government of Canada outreach activities.

While September 19, 2011 marked the deadline for the common experience payment applications, former eligible students can still apply through the exceptional circumstances clause of the settlement agreement. We are committed to this process of reconciliation in our relationship with aboriginal people in Canada.

Finally, it is abundantly clear that the Government of Canada has been, is and will continue to be committed to a fair and lasting resolution to the legacy of Indian residential schools.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

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

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